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LAWRENCE



# LAWRENCE

## *THE STORY OF HIS LIFE*

*By*  
EDWARD ROBINSON

*With an Introductory Note by*  
A. W. LAWRENCE

*Illustrated with a Coloured Frontispiece  
and 32 pages of plates*



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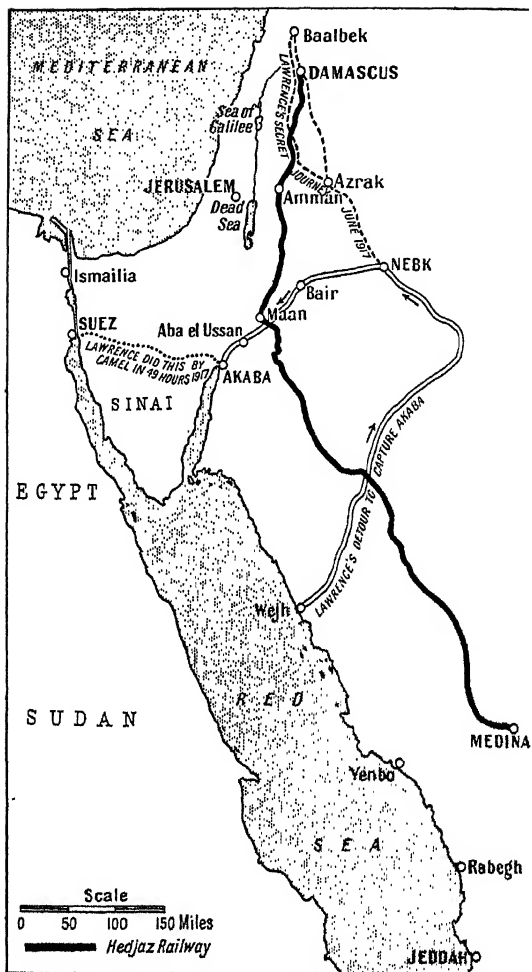
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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

*THE author of this book was himself an eye-witness of many of the scenes described. I have read the proofs of the book, and find no errors of fact, while the general picture seems to me as accurate as could reasonably be expected in a book of its purpose.*

A. W. LAWRENCE

*July 1935.*



## PREFACE

FIFTEEN years ago, to satisfy the curiosity of a small circle of friends, I wrote a two-hundred-page 'story' of my two and a half years' association with Colonel Lawrence and his Arabs. It caused a slight sensation, especially when those who read Lawrence's own story realized that I had, in fact, understated the adventures.

When Lawrence died, I determined to write my own story of his life, if only to clear away the foolish mysteries with which his name had been associated. I was half-way through my rough notes when the call came for the present book. It is written for youth, to give them a straightforward, simple account of the exploits of a wonderful Englishman, who himself was the spirit of youth and adventure.

I was in a position to watch Lawrence and his fellow officers, and the Arabs, in all their moods. I handled a large number of the dispatches that passed up and down the line.

As always, the watcher sees most of the game. Lawrence—to use the team example—was driven by the rest to be an extreme individualist. He appreciated the team spirit, but the others gave him very few passes, and spoilt many of his movements.

Therefore, he had to cut in, dodge the opposition throughout the length of the field, and himself score the winning goal.

What the Allies team forgot then, and forget even now, is that he cut in *to win for the team*, and not for his own glory. Let the old ones shake their heads and say he wouldn't stick to the rules. I think youth will agree that he played the game.

E. R.

*July* 1935.

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## CHAPTER I

*Ah, take the Cash in hand and waive the Rest;  
Oh, the brave Music of a distant Drum!*

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

IN a corner of the playing-ground of an Oxford school, apart from the yelling crowd of boys who were playing their own games just as they wanted to, a quiet, small-built lad was leaning up against the wall, with his nose buried in a book.

Now and again he would lift his head to a shout from one of the players.

‘Come in and join us!’ shouted one.

‘Old bookworm!’ called another.

The rest, with that contempt for a boy who will not ‘play ball’, left him alone.

Thomas Edward Lawrence, to give him his full name, was not really a coward. He just didn’t like games. He would scramble and claw his way along a ditch or a stream until he found out where it came from. He would spend many hours climbing in and out of ruins, up and down the mounds that marked the place where the ancient Britons and the conquering Romans used to camp, examining each relic suggesting history. He would try to find out just what it belonged to, and try to visualize what sort of man it was who last used it.

At other times he would steal away on his bicycle, with a camera slung across his shoulder, and from various angles would take pictures of old castles, cathedrals, and old manor-houses. Now and then he would come across what to any one else would look like an ordinary heap of stones. But this youth, noting this mark, and that shape, would know it to be some sort of monument, erected hundreds of years ago, to mark some event in the history of the country.

If he would not join in games, he did not always remain behind the cover of a book. He always wanted to find out things—where they began, how they began, and why they began.

He took part in some of the scrimmages amongst the boys sometimes, the sort of 'rough house' that develops suddenly and is as suddenly ended by an unexpected incident. In one the play got a bit too heavy, and Lawrence went down with a broken leg. The accident had a curious effect. His other brothers were tall, and there was every sign that he would match them in physique. The break in the leg, however, stopped his growth, and he never got beyond five feet four inches.

Occasionally his search for ancient history led him into strange paths. One day he found an old map of Oxford which indicated the existence of an underground stream. Before, no one had really

thought that the stream near the gas-works was the same as that which ran near Folly Bridge, but this old map clearly showed that it was one and the same stream.

This secret stream suggested adventure, and one day Lawrence started off in a canoe from just behind the gas-works, determined to follow the course of the stream and to reach, if it was possible, the Folly Bridge end. One or two of his school-fellows laughed when they saw him launch the canoe, but when he paddled out of sight underground, it did not seem quite so amusing.

Lawrence found himself in pitch darkness as soon as he was away from the open. Cautiously feeling his way, he paddled slowly along, unable to see a yard ahead. He heard the dull roar of traffic overhead. He was under one of the streets!

For half a mile he continued his weird journey, and in the silent stretches all he heard was the dip and drip from his paddle, or the soft scrape of wood as he touched an unseen bank. Two or three times he heard the clatter of hoofs above him, or the rumble of wheels, as he passed under yet another of Oxford's streets, until ahead he saw the faintest glimmer of light. He was coming out! In a few minutes he emerged from his strange underground journey, his frail craft drifting into the backwater of Salter's boat-yard near Folly Bridge.

There was a small crowd of his schoolmates waiting, a little astonished, to give him a noisy reception. As he had paddled out of sight, those who saw him begin the journey scampered along the streets, calling out to one or two others:

‘Lawrence is paddling down the old Trill—underneath the road!’

The fact that the ‘old bookworm’ was daring to risk such a journey intrigued them, and when he did paddle out of the darkness there was a scramble to greet him.

‘Good old Lawrence!’

‘By jove, that took a bit of doing.’ ‘Not so dusty, after all.’

So the cries went on, and soon he was the centre of admiring cronies who a little while before had shouted at him because he would not join in their games.

The more curious wanted to know more about it.

‘Why did you do it, was it for a dare?’ asked one.

Young Lawrence shook his head. ‘No,’ was his quiet answer. ‘I just wanted to know where it went.’

The months and years went on. He did *not* join in the games, and he said quite frankly that he did not like school. He liked books and all that sort of thing, but he thought school, as school, was ‘tiresome’.

All his holidays were spent wandering about the

countryside of England and France, carrying out his constant search for the 'whys' and 'wherefores' of the peoples who lived so many hundreds of years ago.

He had not grown or filled out much. He was still only five feet four inches in height, and did not weigh much more than seven stone. But he had now collected a little fame.

He was at Jesus College, and of all those students whose days had to be spent studying, reading many books, writing many essays, he attracted attention because he seemed to do those things much more than any one else. Studies over, he would spend most of his time cycling, and he was a very active member of the Cycling Company of the Oxford Officers' Training Corps.

When he spoke people took notice of him, and his essays had a quality which marked him out as an exceptionally clever student, a young man who would undoubtedly make a name for himself.

Archaeology was his speciality, and this study one day brought him to the point of compiling an essay on the castles built by the Crusaders in Palestine and Syria. He had read about them, of course, and had studied all the authorities on the subject. But this was not enough. He wanted to see for himself, to know what the country was like, what sort of people lived there now, and what

traces those who had gone before had left of their life and habits.

In 1909, when he was twenty years of age, he made his first pilgrimage in northern Syria, his object being to follow the path of the old Crusaders.

He took very little money with him when he left England—about £100—and as soon as he landed at Beirut he set off on foot for his self-imposed tramp through Syria and Palestine.

For his food he depended mainly on the rough hospitality of the natives, and when he eventually returned to the coast and to England he came back with the major portion of his money still unspent. His thirst for knowledge took him off the beaten track. For four months, in the spring of the year, he tramped all over this region, working his way up from Palestine until he reached ancient Edessa, now known as Urfa.

He went over the country which was immortalized by that miscellaneous army of lords and vagabonds, soldiers and peasants, who marched from their own countries into the unknown mysteries of Asia—these we now know as the Crusaders. Three hundred years were spent in constant wars between what was then known as Christendom and the Mohammedans. The Crusaders built their castles, and they were stormed. They built their churches, and they were destroyed and replaced by mosques.

In turn, the great castles and cities in Syria and Palestine saw the passing of Arabs, Crusaders, Sultans of Egypt, Mongol Emperors, and Persian Shahs. When young Lawrence turned over the stones, so to speak, on this much-trampled ground, in order to read their history, he began his own long pilgrimage to fame.

When he tramped through Syria it had then been in the hands of the Turks for something like five hundred years.

The Crescent ruled where once the cross of the Crusaders flew in pride. Forsaking civilized paths, he trod the narrow, forgotten ways of the old pilgrims. He climbed to the castle of Sahyoun, perched on its pinnacle of rock. He visited the ruins of Antioch of St. Paul's days. He noted here and there the site of the great wall that circled the city in those times, a wall on which four horses could be driven abreast. It was outside Antioch that the Battle of the Lance was fought. The Crusaders, defiant, not expecting to survive defeat, made up an army of horsemen without horses, pikemen without pikes, swordsmen with cudgels, and women armed with rocks, and fought for the honour of Christ!

Unarmed Crusaders snatched weapons from their enemies and beat them down. Dying Crusaders passed on their lances and swords to those

on their feet. The Christian battle-line went on, and snatched a famous victory.

How much of this did the modern young Crusader rebuild from the mighty ruins?

He fought again the battles of Richard Cœur de Lion. He saw the ruins of both Christian and Moslem castles, buried by the sands of the desert and remembered only as names. Discarding civilized ways, he mixed with the Bedouin.

He 'ate their salt'—a Bedouin will never harm any one who has 'eaten salt' with him, or, to be exact, has shared the hospitality of his camp. A stranger is risking not only his possessions but his life when he travels alone in the desert. But young Lawrence took all these risks, and after his wanderings through a harsh, burnt-up, waterless land, he reached the ancient site of Edessa, having followed for the latter part of his journey the twists and turns of the river Euphrates.

In his pilgrimage he found Edessa's cathedrals turned into mosques. The Crusaders' castles, the towers still intact, were inhabited by Arabs, with their dogs, goats, and children.

Great citadels, with their courtyards as strong as ever, were filled with sheep and camels.

Very few people knew of these ruins, or if they did they were not interested in them. Robbers had lived in them. The wandering Arab tribes

made a home of them for one night, and then moved on.

As Lawrence moved amongst them and pried here and there between the rocks, he would startle great lizards, basking in the hot sun, who would scurry off into their holes on seeing this strange being intruding in their haunts. There must have been some other driving force than a mere search for knowledge in this quest in forgotten lands for even more forgotten armies and their castles. His family were connected with the great Sir Walter Raleigh and had carried with them in the succeeding generations something of his daring, adventurous spirit. Whatever his impulse, he wanted to know more about this land.

Was he following a star?

Had he seen a sign in the sky, as did the Crusaders of old?



## CHAPTER II

*Think, in this batter'd Caravanserai  
Whose Doorways are alternate Night and Day,  
How Sultan after Sultan with his Pomp  
Abode his Hour or two, and went his way.*

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

WHEN Lawrence returned, inspired by what he had seen, he wrote such a remarkable essay that he was awarded a four-year scholarship—a very high honour for a student who was only twenty-one years of age.

He elected to spend these four years with expeditions in Palestine, Syria, and Egypt. These were being sent to dig out from the sand and rock of the desert the ruins of bygone civilizations, and the authorities, who mainly relied on much older and more experienced men for this work, thought so much of what Lawrence had done 'off his own bat' that they were delighted to have his assistance.

His return to the desert was marked by a visit to Carchemish, where the British Museum had organized a series of 'diggings' with the hope of finding out some of the wonders of the old Hittite capital. It was really a great mound of sand, which had piled up so high through the centuries that all traces of the buildings had disappeared. Forty years ago a stray traveller had reported on strange

rocks and walls which had been revealed by a fall, and the Museum directors were resolved to dig and dig until the great hill of sand gave up its secrets.

Young Lawrence felt it an honour to have been accepted to help in the work. He liked poking about among the relics of past ages, and he pleased the older men working there with his keenness and cleverness.

This was in the winter of 1910-11. There were few visitors to the place, only those interested in such ancient history making the long and tiring journey to inspect the ruins.

Those who did go there wrote to friends that they had seen 'a young man named Lawrence'. Another young student, working with him, gave some account of his experiences, and described himself and his friend as 'odd apprentices'.

After a while, the Arabs and Kurds, and even the Turks, who were working in and near the ruins, began to take notice of the quiet little Englishman. They spoke of him with awe. He was no stranger to their ways. He could speak their languages, a little slowly, but correctly.

When work for the day was done, he would go down into their villages, and, sitting cross-legged on the ground, just as they did, would talk with them, and join in all the laughter and tittle-tattle of village life.

They also found out that he had no fear, and that for a man of so small a body he was wonderfully strong. In their simple way they liked him because he would have nothing whatever to do with any kind of cruelty.

He usually kept a very serious face, but when he did smile or laugh it was such a happy event that others had to join in. Digging up the bones of the past did not dry up his sense of humour.

German engineers were also working near the ruins. They were engaged on the Baghdad railway, and were then busy on a great bridge over the river. Lawrence did not like the way they treated some of the natives, and he was not afraid to say so. The result was that some of the Germans began to show their dislike for him in many ways, but he did not trouble much about their feelings. He even let them cart away from the ruins the rubbish and stones which were thrown to one side, to help them to make their road.

One day, he and his friend, another archaeologist named Woolley, were sitting inside their little house when their native servant, rather frightened, called out to them.

‘O masters, the police have called for thee!’

The Turkish policeman came in, portly, pompous, and full of authority. Going up to Lawrence, he told him he was under arrest for ‘having stolen

stones . . . which he had sold to the Germans for the sum of thirty Turkish pounds'.

Lawrence laughed. 'Stolen?' he questioned. 'What rot! The stones are just rubbish, and I gave them to the Germans for their road.'

'That does not alter the charge,' said the policeman. 'You have to come with me.'

He took charge of Lawrence, and Woolley went with them, protesting all the way. Lawrence was laughing, for he thought it very funny. It was no joke, however, for when they arrived at the court they found it very full, and a red-faced angry magistrate was waiting to deal with the case.

The charge was read over again, and when the evidence had been given Lawrence and his friend began to realize that the Turks meant every word, and there was every chance of his being sent to prison. They both argued, but it was all in vain, and they were lucky to secure a delay of one week in which to submit a defence.

Woolley wrote down, in very official-sounding words, the truth about the stones. It seemed to him to be quite a simple matter, but when Lawrence was marched off the next week, between two guards, and was once again put in the dock, the magistrate took the notes, and kept them. Woolley asked that they should be returned to him, but the



The Modern World discovers the Ancient World  
—excavation in the desert.





Voices murmuring like bees'—an Arab village guest room.



'He wore their clothes, ate their food, and lived  
their life. He was accepted as one of them'  
--Lawrence in the desert.

old Turk took them with him to his office when the court adjourned for lunch.

Woolley had a chance to talk to Lawrence, for now they could both see that the magistrate was determined to send him to prison. Woolley had to get the papers back, and between them they decided to try some 'rough stuff'. Turkish prisons were nasty places, unhealthy and full of insects, and people who were put in them had a horrible time.

When the court met again, the two friends could see by the pleased expressions on the faces of the Turks in the room that Lawrence was 'for it'. Woolley looked over at Lawrence, standing in the dock, who nodded to him. It was the signal.

'Hands up!' shouted Woolley, as he whipped out a revolver. 'Don't move, or I'll shoot,' he said, pointing at the magistrate's fat body. It was a nice large mark, and the old Turk knew it.

Everybody in the room shot his hands up to the ceiling. They were all thoroughly scared by the shout of the now angry Englishman, who was waving the revolver in a gentle circle, so that it seemed to point at each and everyone of them at the same time.

As Woolley shouted, Lawrence jumped out of the dock and ran through the room to the magistrate's office at the back of the little court. The Turks did not watch what he was doing: they

were much too busy keeping their eyes on Woolley and his pistol.

Lawrence laughed as he ran through the crowd. This was something like action. They'd show this gang of thieves that they could not put this sort of thing over on Englishmen and get away with it!

In a few seconds he came dashing back, waving the papers in his hand in triumph.

'I've got them,' he shouted.

Woolley motioned him to the door and joined him there. No one attempted to stop them as they edged out of the room into the courtyard. While the larger Woolley was sufficiently dangerous with his revolver moving slowly round in a menacing circle, his much smaller friend was obviously spoiling for a fight.

The Turks were not having any, and as the two friends retreated up the little street, they gathered outside, helpless, angry, but cowed, and watched their prisoner disappear in the direction of the camp, a free man.

Little more was heard of the affair. Apparently the Turks decided that the two Englishmen were not mere diggers in the earth—they were also fighters!

In 1913 the ruins were visited by an Army Officer, a Major Young (who is now Major Sir Hubert Young, K.C.M.G., D.S.O., Governor of Northern Rhodesia).

He was surprised to find any one in the ruins, because they were 'closed' for the summer, but he found 'a quiet little man of the name of Lawrence . . . living there alone'.

Lawrence showed Major Young and his friend over the mound, and they became so deeply interested in all he told them that they forgot their train—the only one due back that day. Lawrence offered to put them up for the night, and actually, while the friend moved off the next morning, Major Young stayed several days with him.

Meals were served in plates and bowls which had been buried in the earth for centuries, and when the coffee was served, Major Young found to his surprise and delight that he was drinking out of cups which the Hittites had used nearly four thousand years ago.

Once or twice the Major went on visits with Lawrence to neighbouring villages, and he noticed immediately how much his friend seemed to be at home amongst the natives. They welcomed him, and he sat with them and talked with them so easily and naturally that it was difficult to think of him as an Englishman at all. He seemed to belong to the place.

Having seen the serious interest Lawrence took in all this work, he was rather staggered to find that this archaeologist was also a humorist.

They were all talking about the Germans—there had been an addition to the party, as a brother of Lawrence's had come out to pay him a visit—when Major Young noticed a smile, or rather a grin, spreading over Lawrence's face.

'What's the joke?' he asked.

'I fooled the Germans a little while ago, that's all.'

'Fooled them?'

'Yes,' answered Lawrence, now laughing outright. 'I was a little annoyed at the way they were treating the natives, so I decided to teach them a lesson.'

Lawrence turned the Major round and pointed to a large mound. 'You see that,' he said.

Major Young nodded.

'Well, the other evening, I dragged some large iron pipes up that mound and pushed them over the edge so that they were pointing over the road and the bridge that the Germans are building.'

'What happened?'

Lawrence laughed again. 'I won't swear to every word, but I am told that as soon as they saw the pipes sticking up there in the half-light, they thought of me—I'm a spy in their eyes, you know—decided the pipes were guns, and in quick time the wires to Berlin were humming with frantic protests and alarms.'

‘What?’ Major Young looked at Lawrence, hardly daring to believe him, as he stood there, his face all creased in gleeful smiles.

‘Yes, they did. They sent telegrams saying that “the mad Englishman”’ (at this Lawrence had a renewed spasm of laughter) ‘was mounting guns over the road they were building, and was threatening the road and the bridge over the river.’

Major Young had many chances of watching the young Englishman, who from the first had attracted his attention. He found him a curious mixture. He devoted all his working time to puzzling out the ancient writings on the Hittite monuments, and took great care to see that all details were carefully noted.

In his leisure moments he would go well away from the camp, stick up some old bottle or tin, and practise target shooting with a long Mauser pistol. Major Young had one or two shooting matches with Lawrence, but the professional soldier was beaten each time. As Major Young has put it on record, ‘Lawrence was a wonderful shot’.

If Lawrence was not working, or practising revolver shooting, he was usually reading.

If he wasn’t reading, he could not be found anywhere. He would be away in the desert on one of those mysterious errands of which he said so little and thought so much.

Students from American universities, spending their holidays in making a round of the ancient ruins, got the shock of their lives when they reached Carchemish.

One of them was quite frank about it. In writing home he said, 'I expected to find grey-haired old men with a scholarly stoop.' Instead he found two young men, very young.

Lawrence was usually dressed in a tennis shirt, shorts, and an Oxford blazer with the Magdalen badge on the pocket, and it is remarkable that then, as always in his life, he never seemed to be affected by the heat, but looked quite cool and calm.

The spare beds in which these visitors sometimes slept had as covers rare rugs which Lawrence had found in some out-of-the-way village. They had been tucked away in odd corners, but he knew that they had been silent witnesses of centuries of colourful history.

He would slip out of his camp in the evening, and the next day, or perhaps two or three days afterwards, he would come back with some souvenir of his wandering.

Villagers in those remote hills and valleys were beginning to whisper, in wonder, of this quiet, blue-eyed 'infidel', who wandered amongst them so fearlessly, and who, in turn for his tales of that

far-off land of his, would listen to the tittle-tattle of their lives.

These people had no newspapers, no books. Very few of them could either read or write. The story-teller of the East was really a living newspaper. He carried news from village to village and town to town.

When the story-teller arrived he would sit in the shadow of the village 'hall', or in the cool shadow of an overhanging bush, and when the young and old were gathered about him, in sing-song tones he would tell them what was happening in the great world from which he came. Some tales were true, but some were made up as he went along. If stories had to be told, he could tell them!

It was to these and similar tales that Lawrence listened, in times when, in the afternoon heat, voices murmuring like bees would drone on in their talk of things gone, things present, and things to come. At other times, before an open fire and underneath a curtain made by a star-spangled sky, he would try to tell these new-found friends of his what his England was like.

He would tell them of the great ships that travelled the seas, and of a place called 'Lundra'. They never tired of hearing of this mighty city, whose numbers were greater than ever they heard, even during the days of the splendid Arabian kings.

If Lawrence was to be believed, the people in 'Lundra' lived above the ground, on the ground, and below the ground. They knew of the iron road farther west, and of the steel monsters that ran on it, dragging wooden carriages behind them, but this 'Inglesi' spoke of iron roads like this running down into the bowels of the earth, where men had to come up many steps before they could again see the sun.

'There are wheeled houses,' he would tell them, 'which carry people inside and on the roof, running along the roads.'

'Merciful Allah!' they would whisper, wonderingly.

'And streets so long that you cannot see the end of them!'

At this a hum of astonishment would rise from the ring of listeners.

Such was the life of Lawrence in those early days. When he was not engaged on the 'diggings', he was generally tramping up and down the countryside, learning a little more each time of this land whose very age was mystery itself.

Sometimes he would follow a twisting, narrow track in and out of a rocky valley, up a path worn so deeply that it must have been used for hundreds of years, to find, perched high up on the hill-side, an old Roman keep, or the bare walls of a once great Crusader's castle.

He would walk side by side with camel herders across far stretches of desert, or make one of a passing caravan, looking back with his dreaming mind to the old days of frankincense and myrrh, the days when the bazaars of Damascus and Aleppo sold the scented robes and precious jewels brought by caravans from far Cathay and from India's temples and palaces.

Hundreds of years ago a great people had lived in this land, and all that was left of them were stories, and a few rocks. The Barbarians had swept away the tiring rule of Rome, and for a few centuries clans and tribes merely wandered from one city to another, building on the ruins of its former greatness until they in turn were driven out by stronger tribes.

Then an orphan named Mohammed preached a new faith, and by the ninth century A.D. his followers, inspired by the Koran (the Arabic Bible), spread themselves over the then known earth, from the far-flung outposts of Cathay even to Spain. The Arabs created an empire. They became masters in astronomy, in the study of medicine, in mathematics. They were the first to invent a magnetic needle, all those hundreds of years ago. They were expert navigators.

The Arabs knew then many things that the world afterwards lost for centuries, and even now,

in this modern age, the spades of the diggers in their lost cities find some treasure which has a beauty in colour and correctness of form beyond our knowledge.

In the four years before the Great War, Lawrence did not, could not, wander the length and breadth of the old empires. But he visited what is felt to be the cradle of this earth's civilization, where it was really born. He read into its ruins, its tombs, its buried treasures, and the inscriptions carved on rocks—which are the copy-books of olden times—the story of its wonderful past. He saw again in the castles of the Crusaders the might of Christendom advancing and retreating in its long fight with Islam.

He went down from Syria into Palestine, and passed through that land where the knights and peasants of England and of Europe had fought and fought again for the Holy City of Jerusalem. He travelled the road where the motor-car was just beginning to appear. He travelled those roads across the Sinai and Syrian deserts where the pad-pad of countless caravans of camels had worn a firm path through the ever-moving wilderness. He put his feet to narrow tracks which were only known to the story-tellers, and which—to a man who had heart and courage and strength—meant a short cut through seemingly impassable stretches

of country which was nothing but a criss-cross of volcanic eruption and dry, life-killing, grassless, and treeless land.

Where he did meet people he began to put together the stories he heard in the far north of the desert, those he had heard in the Jordan valley, and those whispered to him in the wilderness of Sinai. They all told the same tale—oppression. They all spoke softly—a complaint overheard meant imprisonment, sometimes torture, sometimes death—of what five hundred years of Turkish rule had done for the Arabs. The once mighty Arabic empire was scattered, useless.

Each tribe had its loyalties, but despite the fact that they were of the same national blood, they hated each other. They fought on sight, either with rifle or with knife. They raided each other's caravans, and carried off camels and slaves. The men from the hills would descend to the plains in the night, and when the morning sun came it would light up a scene of destruction and loot—the passing of the raiders.

They were all blood-foes, each on oath to kill his enemy. But from north to south, east to west, there were two great thoughts, two great dreams. They dreamed of the empire that once had been. They dreamed of release from the hateful Turkish yoke.

Lawrence was not rich. He spent most of his

early years in the Near East amongst the poor yet proud Arabs. He became infected with their desire for freedom, and as he grew to know them he began to believe in them.

There have been great travellers who, disguised as Arabs, have traversed the great deserts and even penetrated to the Holy City of Mecca.

Lawrence was small, clean-shaven, fair-haired, blue-eyed, with a skin that never turned brown but went brick-red. He was the very opposite to an Arab, and as such would be picked out everywhere he went as a stranger, and ordinarily as some one not only to be despised but to be attacked, robbed, and even killed.

But he was open in his sympathy for their troubles, so close to them in their thoughts and desires, so earnest in his belief in their dreams, that they took him to their hearts and kept him as their friend. He wore their clothes, ate their food, and lived their life. He was accepted as one of them.

This was the simple side of his nature. There was another remarkable side. His close studies of military campaigns, of the crusades, his knowledge of military history, coupled with that adventurous spirit born in him from a long line of fighters and rovers, helped him to look over the centuries and to form living pictures in his mind of the peoples of the past and of all they did.

The glories of the past and the troubles of the present filled him with a desire to know yet more about the strange, mysterious land.

His thoughts were not all dreams. He went back to England and helped to write books which were full of detailed, carefully worded descriptions of the places he had visited and the ancient cities he was helping to dig out of the rock and sand of the desert.

The older experts, men with years of experience, saw in these reports the evidence of a wonderful mind; and among those who knew the country and its history, young Lawrence began to be regarded as a genius. One great man said to another that he was 'a wonderful boy . . . given to wandering among the Arabs'.

In 1913 Lawrence provided Oxford with plenty of gossip by bringing home two of his Arab foremen. They lived in a hut at the bottom of his garden—which he had built, first, for his own use as a study, and second, to give him a retreat from the boisterous attentions of his younger brothers.

During their short stay there he managed to teach them to ride bicycles, but they were mainly concerned in trying out the theory of the fastest way to ride. In the end they decided that the best way to get up speed was to ride from side to side of the road, using the run down into the gutter to give

them the increased impetus. Despite the fact that in those pre-War days there was not much traffic about, this rather original method of riding was a little embarrassing to the ordinary users of the roads.

Lawrence took the Arabs about a little. Dressed as they were in their long cloaks, many people took them to be women, but they could not quite account for the beard on the face of one, except to compare 'her' with the famous bearded ladies of circus fame.

They paid one visit to the Zoo. Some animals, of course, they knew. There are plenty of small snakes to be found in Arabia, but the boa constrictors fascinated them. Inevitably, when asked what they had seen in the Zoo, they would reply they had seen snakes 'as long as houses', and as all Arabs can tell a really good tale, it is probable that when they returned to their native land those snakes reached the length of a street.

### CHAPTER III

*'Tis all a Chequer-board of Nights and Days  
Where Destiny with Men for Pieces plays.*

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

IN the winter of 1913-14 the Egyptian Government were very anxious to get a military map of Sinai, and commissioned Colonel Newcombe to do it. The Turkish Government were approached for permission to carry out the survey, but they were adamant in their refusal to allow such a thing.

The authorities concerned put their heads together. They addressed another request to the Turks. Would they kindly permit them to undertake an archaeological survey of the country?

This was a very different matter. The Turks were gracious about it, and in a short time Woolley and Lawrence were engaged in surveying Sinai, more or less inch by inch, studying ruins and ancient caravan routes. Colonel Newcombe was with them, and in due time the three had finished their studies and returned home with an 'archaeological map' which, to the experts, looked remarkably like a very exact ordnance survey.

For once the cunning Turk had been outwitted, and Colonel Newcombe had the materials for the

map which was so badly needed by the Egyptian Government.

In the summer of 1914 Lawrence was back in Oxford.

He was in the city when war was declared, but for some time his services were constantly in demand by the War Office Map Section. Colonel Newcombe's survey was being prepared for the use of the Egyptian forces, but as he was on service in France, there were constant calls for Lawrence to attend the War Office to explain various details.

He was, of course, in civilian clothes, and after a time some of the 'heads' began to wonder what a young man was doing in the War Office still in 'civvies'—every one else was in uniform. These remarks got to the ears of those in charge of the Map Section, and a gentle hint was dropped to Lawrence that it would save a lot of talk if he 'borrowed' a uniform to wander in and out of the Map Section. This he did, and was seen in future as a Second Lieutenant.

There was no question about his fitness for army service, for he wrote to one of his brothers about this time that he had never been in such good physical condition. It is doubtful, however, if he ever volunteered for service. Like Topsy, he 'just growed'.

It is perhaps as well that there was no spare uniform representing a staff officer, for he would probably have put that on if it had been the first to come to hand.

The Army authorities very quickly found out that they had something strange dumped on them.

They were used to soldiers, even if they worked in offices. But this—this student was nothing like a soldier! What is more, even in his uniform he didn't look like one.

If he had his tunic on, the collar was not buttoned up. Either one or other of his jacket pockets would be unfastened. Perhaps one shoulder-strap would be flapping in the wind. He was a Second Lieutenant, entitled to have a single star on each shoulder. But they could never be certain that they were both there.

Most times he would be minus the Sam Browne belt that an officer must wear. There were so many things officers had to do, but Lawrence would, somehow or other, manage to miss most of them.

His superiors argued with him, ordered him to do this and that, and also reported him. Nothing they did altered him. He just went on. He had his work to do in the Section, and he did it. As for wearing uniform, he might have to put it on, but once it was on, what did it matter?

Unquestionably, in the eyes of those who made

the Army their profession, he was an insult to it. They did not hesitate to tell him so, and he did not hesitate to tell them that he didn't like the Army.

So things went on until December, Lawrence becoming more disliked as time went on. He himself began to hate the one thing that kept the Army going—discipline.

But a break was coming for him. Colonel Newcombe had been called back to England from France by the War Office. Help was needed in Egypt. They wanted officers who knew the country and could speak its language.

Asked whom he would like to take with him, Colonel Newcombe was ready with his names, and among them were those of Woolley and Lawrence, the two friends of pre-War days.

By the beginning of the year Lawrence was in Cairo, where he joined the Military Map Department of the Intelligence Service. The fact that he was actually on active service did not alter his ways. His superiors in the Department (except those who really knew him) regarded him with great suspicion and disfavour, and, in a way, 'sent him to Coventry'.

Lawrence was enjoying himself. Not only was he in a country he knew, but he was dealing with the maps of a country which he himself had travelled and had sketched.

In the Army—no matter how much you may sympathize with people who do not like its stiff ways and its orders—it is only possible to keep the machine running if discipline is maintained, and if things are done in a regular manner. There are times when it is possible to cut across the ‘red-tape’ of regulations. (Hard-and-fast rules are called ‘red-tape’ because all instructions, orders, and reports are usually kept in folders and tied up with red-coloured tape.) If you take a short cut in army routine, you may get to where you want a little more quickly than otherwise, but you throw the machine out of gear.

Lawrence had found this out, but he did not like being delayed in doing a thing which he knew was *right*. The trouble was that his knowledge and his youth were not sufficient to count against the long-established ‘mind’ of the Army.

If a map was found to be wrong, a report had to be made out, the mistake indicated, and the report sent away for examination. As the document went up the scale of authority, it would be added to by other notes. Then it would reach the top, and back it would come by the same route. Perhaps it might be merely for the alteration of the spelling of a name, but this procedure was the rule laid down by the regulations. It had been done for years before, and there was no reason to alter it. ‘Orders is orders.’

Second-Lieutenant Thomas Edward Lawrence thought otherwise. Some maps he knew were completely wrong, so he scrapped them. Others he altered as he wished. On some he wrote funny little notes, especially where he saw something which he considered ridiculous.

Of course, he was told he could not do things this way. But he went on doing them. His superiors knew it was the wrong way to do things, but they soon found that he was not doing it for fun.

He knew what he was doing. He knew, and he told them (whether they were officers of his own rank or his superiors), that a mistake on a map might mean the loss of a war, and in the country which they were examining you could not afford to make a mistake. The desert was too hard a country for errors and omissions. Ten miles out in the placing of a well might mean just that much difference between life and death. A mistake in naming one of the many little valleys that ran across and up and down the country might mean a wrong turning.

In a civilized country you can take a wrong turning, but quite soon you come to another sign-post which puts you right. Take the wrong turning in the desert, and you become one of the legions of the lost, until your whitened bones are found by some stray traveller years afterwards.

Yes, Lawrence knew what a wrong map-marking meant in this country. He knew how wars were won and lost. He was a youthful, untidy, most unsoldierly individual, but he had a mind equal to that of some of the world's greatest generals.

Whether it was a captain or a general in the room at the time, Lawrence did not spring to attention, salute, wait to be spoken to, and then say:

'Excuse me, sir, but I would respectfully draw your attention to the fact that there is a mistake on this map.'

He would stab his finger at the error, and say quite briefly, 'That's wrong,' or 'That's no good,' or 'That's rubbish. It ought to be torn up.'

And he would miss the 'sir' as well!

Unquestionably, in the eyes of those who were running the war, he was *no soldier*.

In the next six months, however, Lawrence's knowledge and authority about matters in the Near East became accepted, if only because he was always giving evidence of knowing just a little bit more about the country than the next man.

The staff officers began to take note of his little alteration to this map, his scathing comment on that. His short but descriptive reports of this and that area were not now put on one side, as they were before. So quickly did he make a name for

himself that when it came to the point of sending officers with specialized knowledge—especially of Turks and their ways—to Mesopotamia, to report on the position in Kut, Lawrence was one of the chosen.

When Lawrence eventually did reach Basra, he was surprised and delighted to find Miss Gertrude Bell there. This lady had led a remarkable life. Before the War she had penetrated to some of the innermost parts of the desert, facing great hardship and dangers in exploring what had previously been unknown or little known parts of the Syrian and Arabian deserts. She was famed for her own knowledge of the country and the tribes, and she served England by placing that knowledge at the country's disposal, not only in peace time, but during the time of war.

They met, and they talked, going back to the old adventures in the desert and particularly to the ruins at Carchemish.

While they went back into the past, the guns up the river sounded sullenly, an ever-present reminder of war, and it was a serious leave-taking when Lawrence bade farewell to the gallant lady.

Once up river, he found his first really big task on hand. The British staff had already begun the first talks in connexion with the suggested surrender of Kut. Unfortunately, despite all the bravery

and sacrifices of the garrison, it was evident that Kut must surrender, and the only thing now left was to get the best possible terms from the Turks. Lawrence's job was to get as many of the British wounded away from Kut as was possible.

It was because Lawrence knew the country that he was brought in to help. After a few days in the trenches, engaged in endless talks with the staff, breathing air filled with the pestilential, awful smell of dead bodies, and eating food which could not be kept free from the swarming flies and insects, he caught a slight fever. However, after a day's rest he shook this off, and, still weak, carried on with his duties.

The time had come for the British officers, including Lawrence, to go out under the white flag to the Turkish lines. This was something new to him. He had, of course, met death in its quiet moods, the death that comes with old age and with illness. He had also taken a photograph of some dead Turks seen in the Suez Canal after one of the actions there.

This was a more tragic, more terrible thing.

As they walked out about two hundred yards, the young student was suddenly pitch-forked into all the horrors of war. Here and there were piles of his own countrymen and of the Turks, thrown away in this reckless gamble for victory. All that

was fine in his nature, his habitual refusal to cause needless pain, his hatred of suffering, rose in revolt against this pitiful sight.

The war had to be fought, but he felt that if victory must be won, it must be won by sheer cleverness ('strategy' as the military experts call it) and with as little loss to human life as possible. He did not feel heroic about this business. This was the price of victory and defeat. This battle the Turks had won, and, while he kept an outwardly brave front, he fought bitterly to hide his feelings.

There was no glory in this kind of warfare. It was massacre, and murder, and the Turks had won one of the first moves.

It is possible that the half-formed dream of a fight for freedom came a little more into his thoughts these days. There was something wastefully slow about this way of settling victory. War was a thing to be over and done with quickly. It did little else but destroy things.

Some one at head-quarters—probably with a view to testing Lawrence, or perhaps with some idea of keeping him busy and out of what they termed 'mischief' for a while—gave him the job of reporting on the possibilities of map-making, with the assistance of aerial photography, and sent him to start his investigations at Basra.

He reported on this particular matter, but he did a little more than deal with maps and photography.

Having said that the process was all wrong, or at any rate hopelessly out of date, he proceeded to tell his chiefs what he thought about the way they were conducting war.

Their methods of running barges up to the quayside was bad; the way they landed the goods from the barges was worse, and a terrible waste of time; they had no system on the railway, and stores were rotting because they did not know how to deal with them properly; the medical officers did not know their job; and——. Well, there was a lot more, which can be put into one short statement: that the General Staff did not know how to run a war.

Having returned and submitted this report, and knowing it would not make him any more popular, Lawrence began to scheme. He had already got a plan in mind, helped by what he had heard of moves made from England.

He studied the map of the East. He saw just where the Turks were holding back the Allies. He saw how the British forces were handicapped in their fighting in Palestine. And he saw a country for which he had long cherished a certain dream of freedom—Arabia.

He knew—how, it is difficult to say—what steps Lord Kitchener had taken to get King Hussein, the Sherif of Mecca, to start a revolt against the Turks, and the word ‘revolt’ was the one thing that kept coming back into his mind.

He remembered the fierce curses he had heard from one end of the country to the other against the hated Turkish rule, and he dreamed of all the little tribes making one big army—an army against the oppressor.

Here was his chance.

Lawrence had one great friend who was also helping in the Secret Service side of the operations. Commander D. G. Hogarth, a famous traveller in the East, was himself interested in the Arabian question, and he and several others had frequently met, more or less in secret, to see what could be done to help the Allies, and particularly England, in the fight against the Turks.

Things were at a standstill. They wanted to move forward in Palestine, and they wanted more troops to help in that part of the war. But no reinforcements could be sent. The situation on the Western Front had become so serious that, actually, they could do with reinforcements from the East.

Faced with these reports, and knowing that whatever they wished to do they would have to

do themselves, this little group of officers studied, carefully and earnestly, the positions now occupied by the Turks and the British forces.

Lawrence saw his friend. He told him part of his 'dream'. Even the older man was astonished, but he, too, went back to look at the map.

At the same time they heard something which startled them and urged them to swift action.

It seemed that the Turks also had certain ideas about Arabia. It must be remembered that the whole of the Moslem world looked to Mecca for guidance and help in their religion. All those people who followed the teaching of Mohammed—the Moslems of India, of Africa, of the East Indies, of Asia Minor—kept one idea at the back of their minds. It was that of the Jihad, the Holy War. Their religion compelled them to follow the standard raised against the infidel, and if the cry of a Holy War was sent up from Mecca the war between the civilized nations of the world would become completely altered.

It would be the old cry—the Crescent against the Cross—and it would mean that the Moslem subjects of the British Empire would probably be fired by the fanatical, fighting cry of Mohammed, and turn against the Empire's soldiers.

It meant that all India and Africa could be arrayed against the white race, and as the British

Empire controlled the majority of the lands concerned, it might be fatal to the Allies' cause.

Knowing this, the Turks and the Germans had put their heads together, and planned to raise this cry of 'Jehad', saying that they would help those who joined in the battle to make a great Moslem empire. That is what they said.

They did more than that. They started sending troops down the Hejaz railway towards Medina, the last station on the railway. As they travelled they spread the news, the cry of the Holy War. At the same time a German wireless mission, with a special party of secret service agents, started from the other end of the country. Its actual aim was never disclosed, but it was generally believed at British head-quarters that its work was to spread the story about the help the Turks and Germans would give to all those who would fight on their side under the banner of the Holy War.

Those who have read in the story of the Crusades how suddenly the Moslems swept across the Western world will know that this was no dream from an Eastern drug, no nightmare from the smoking of a pipe of hashish—but a real, threatening danger.

Lawrence knew all this. This was where his special knowledge came to be of immense help to England and the Allies.

Mecca, the Holy City to which Moslem pilgrims journey each year, was in the care of the Sherif of Mecca. He had never forgotten that Lord Kitchener had suggested to him the possibilities of a revolt by his forces in aid of the Allies. He had 'sat on the fence', to use a figure of speech, and had watched anxiously the ebb and flow of the war, first in favour of the Allies, and then in favour of Germany and her helpers. The might of the enemy seemed so great, and his own fighting forces so puny.

The news of the Turks' new move frightened him. He would have to do something. Even if all his kingdom went, he would have to turn the Turks away from this very clever idea—because although he was leader of the Moslem world he knew that a Holy War between Mohammedans and Christians would only end one way. He sent a message to the British head-quarters that he would have to revolt 'now or never'.

It is necessary that this situation should be seen as it existed when Lawrence openly laid his plan before the small, select band of specialists in Cairo. With this in mind, Commander Hogarth went down the Red Sea to find out just what the Sherif meant, but he was too late. The revolt had started, and whatever happened, the Sherif of Mecca had openly thrown in his lot on the side of the Allies.

This was the position when the curtain rose on Lawrence's dramatic entry into the Arabian revolt.

There are stories which make delightful reading, stories to the effect that he asked for a fortnight's holiday, which—his regular comrades being tired of him—was eagerly granted. The tale continues that he never came back from this holiday, but stayed on and began his campaign in that way. It is a delightful tale, but, like most stories, the truth is even more strange.

He had told his few friends what he thought was possible. For four months he worked methodically and carefully behind the scenes, trying to convince the great generals who were in charge of operations that he could do something to help the cause of victory if he could be sent down to Arabia.

There might be something in the belief that, rather than be worried any more by this obstinate young man with the steel-blue eyes, they did eventually give orders for him to start on his mission. Anyway, partly convinced that the older experts must have believed there was something in this amateur soldier's plan to have put it forward, they transferred him from the military service proper to what was more or less Secret Service.

What must be understood is this.

Lawrence, despite the respect the Arabs held for

him, was going down to a Holy Land, which is really barred to all 'unbelievers'. This 'infidel', in his belief in a dream, had two things to do.

First, he had to find a leader.

Then he had to make this leader believe that the fighting tribes of Arabia would forget the blood-feuds they had fought for hundreds of years, and, joining hands, would fight the Turks and turn them out of the country they had so long oppressed.

The Turks held the country fast. They held the only railway line, which had fortified posts along it, each within rifle fire of the next. They had modern rifles and modern guns.

The Arabs had very few guns, and these were so old that it was quite probable that they would burst at the first charge. Their arms consisted of old-fashioned muzzle-loading rifles, even those which were fired by flints; spears, and daggers. They were born robbers, and would rather loot and steal and burn than fight for fighting's sake. When they got tired of fighting they usually went back home.

Lawrence knew all this, but he left for the Arabian coast in October 1916, armed with his own dreams and an invincible will. He had no promises of help. He had his 'plan'. That was all.



'His black beard and  
colourless face were  
like a mask'—the Emir  
Faisal.



'It is Faisal and his men, and we  
march on Wejh ! '—Faisal at the  
head of his army.







'It was Colonel Newcombe, his old-time chief'. Colonel Newcombe, who was responsible for Lawrence's being sent to the East after the declaration of war.

## CHAPTER IV

*Then to the rolling Heav'n itself I cried,  
Asking, 'What Lamp had Destiny to guide  
'Her Little Children stumbling in the Dark?'  
And—'A Blind Understanding!' Heav'n replied.*

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

THE Arabian adventure had started. Lawrence left Suez; as the little steamer chugged stolidly along the Gulf he looked thoughtfully at the rocky coast which hid the scenes of some of his former wanderings.

Two years before he had followed the pilgrim's way from Akaba to the middle of the Sinai Desert, and the desert had since held him fast in the clutches of her magic fingers. Now he was visiting the Holy Land of the Moslems for the first time, embarked on an errand which had one end for him, the establishment of an Arabian Empire.

Mr. Ronald Storrs,<sup>1</sup> an expert from Egypt, who had been informed of the plan or idea that was at the back of Lawrence's mind, travelled down with him. The crew were very curious about their passengers, especially the one who, despite his army uniform, looked so little like a soldier. They noticed that he hardly talked to his companion, but was generally dreaming.

<sup>1</sup> Now Sir Ronald Storrs.

'Where's he for?' they asked.

'Jeddah,' some one answered.

'Why?'

That could not be answered, and they were none the wiser at the end of the journey.

There was little adventure in the trip down the Red Sea. Mr. Storrs, wondering just what Lawrence intended to do, found it difficult to get him to talk. Not that either of them wanted to talk. It was too hot, nearly too hot to breathe. It was a relief when the night came, and it became possible to walk the few paces of the small deck with comparative comfort.

Each day was the same—a slow, steady, puffing crawl over a mill-pond of a sea, which rolled in long, lazy swells under a burning hot sun. It was foolish to attempt to stand on the deck or lean against a rail, for the heat burnt through to the flesh.

In the day-time Lawrence spread two or three thicknesses of blanket in the shadow of the deck-house, and, as the shadow shifted with the passing of the hours, he, too, moved. At night-time he seemed to sleep only for a few hours, and was awake with the dawn, with his gaze ever southward.

Stranger still—despite his English name and his English uniform, he sat cross-legged with the ease of any Arab.

The day before they reached Jeddah there was

a change in the weather. The sky turned suddenly to that dark, sullen blue which is the herald of a storm.

An uncomfortable day ended with a wicked, snappish breeze which sprayed the water over the bow. There was a heavy roll to the sea, which would occasionally leave the decks awash.

With a roar, a sudden gale of wind whipped up the gulf. Up came the waves, and up high went the little steamer, her propeller thrashing for a moment out of water as she plunged downward to the next roll. She nosed and fought her way through the terrific seas, shaking herself as she rode them like a dog just coming out from a swim.

As quickly as it came the storm passed on, and they steamed on into calm water.

In the morning Lawrence was looking over the rail at a sea which, just catching the rays of the swiftly rising sun, seemed like a great broad rainbow, to which the oil patches added crazy patterns.

Here and there the smooth surface was broken by the fin of a cruising shark, or by the switchbacks of a school of porpoises. Living streaks of light broke from the sea and were gone as quickly as the eye could follow them: the flying fish were fleeing from the lurking danger below.

On such a morning the homely little steamer

became a galley of the old-time Norsemen, sailing to unknown adventure through a fairy sea.

Mr. Storrs was looking ahead, for he knew they were nearing Jeddah. He had mentioned the fact to his friend, but Lawrence did not appear to be excited by the information. His serious face gave little away, but there was a flash of keen blue eyes, and then they shaded again.

The next morning they were in sight of Jeddah. Ahead, they could see the white heads of waves breaking on the many shoals of sand and rock that are peculiar to this port alone, and the passengers watched keenly as the ship's captain cleverly navigated the criss-cross of currents and brought his vessel to anchor in the little harbour.

It had been hot enough coming down from Suez, but this day seemed worse. As the launch came up to take Lawrence and his friend ashore, the draught caused by the speed of its journey across the bay was the only relief to the heat that came pouring down from the sky. Lawrence knew what the heat of Northern Arabia was like, and had shown fewer signs of feeling it than most people, but this was something different. Writing later, he said 'it struck us speechless', and it is a description which fits the first day of his Arabian adventure.

A mixture of smells from the native bazaar came out to them in the baked air as they made their way

through the streets of the town to the house of the British Consul. Jeddah is a strange place, for nearly all the streets are so narrow that they are bridged from one side to the other with wooden roofs. It is like a crazy town cut out of cardboard, and so thick does the sand and dust lie underfoot that there is little sound as you go along.

Little time was wasted. Another British officer (Colonel Wilson), who was noted for his knowledge of the East, was in Jeddah to welcome Lawrence, and the latter, after a brief introduction, stood back a little and awaited developments.

Abdulla, the King's second son, he saw and did not like. He thought he laughed too much to be the great leader he was looking for. But the laugh left his face as he told Lawrence how the Arabs were faring in their battles. The Turks were getting help, and would soon attack and drive them into the sea. The Arabs had fired away nearly all their ammunition, their guns were useless, and they had not nearly enough food to keep a proper army together to defend the country.

Could the British help?

That was really Lawrence's trouble. How could he ask for Christian troops to save a Moslem country, which was held by the Turks, who themselves were Moslems? It was a pretty puzzle.

Lawrence had heard of the Emir Faisal, one of the King's sons, who was actually leading the Arab troops, and after a lot of artful persuasion, managed to get a letter of authority from the old King which would serve to make him known to Faisal.

Armed with that, the British officers rested, but in the evening they had a surprise.

The telephone bell rang. (The King of the Hejaz had a telephone line running from Jeddah to Mecca, registered Mecca No. 1.)

'Would their Excellencies the British officers like to hear a band?'

Mr. Storrs, who had answered the call, nearly dropped the instrument.

'A band? What are you talking about? What band?' His thoughts could be imagined: whoever heard of a band in the middle of the desert?

The facts were quickly told.

The Governor-General of the Turks once had a band. The Arabs had captured it in the middle of an army, but whilst the fighting soldiers had been sent away as prisoners, the old King kept the band for his entertainment.

'That is the story,' ended the King. 'Now, what would you like to hear?'

They were a little puzzled as to how the band was to be heard, as the King's palace was fifty miles

away. However, kings do not really ask questions. They give commands.

The King was clever, though. He put the receiver on the table in his palace, and, as Lawrence and the others, in turn, picked up the telephone at their end, they heard the King's band playing 'music'.

No one knew what the tune was, but the band was playing, the King was happy about it, and he had pleased the great and mighty British officers.

More than that. To give them a better treat he made the band march those fifty miles so that the officers in Jeddah could hear it play the next day, and he, the King, could have the delight of hearing the music through the wonderful telephone. It was a new toy to the King, but no one knew really what the band played. The music had titles. One was the German National Anthem. Another the Turkish National Anthem. Then there was some more German music. The trouble was that it was mostly in half-notes. If you play 'God Save the King', but instead of progressing by full notes you play half-notes only, you will get some idea of the mix-up. Each and every member of the band took no notice whatever of the conductor, but all did their best to out-blow each other.

The band was sent back!

The next day Lawrence, armed with his letter

for the Emir Faisal, left by boat for the little port of Rabegh, which is about eighty miles from Jeddah. Here he met yet another of the King's sons, Sherif Ali. Lawrence was alone this time, and as the Sherif had not even heard of him, he was greatly surprised to receive orders from the old King.

He looked at the English officer, whose head came up to his shoulder, and read in the King's letter that he was to provide an escort to take 'a great Inglisi' up to the Emir Faisal, *at once*. It was a shock to him, for this was war-time, and there seemed no reason why the King should be sending such an odd-looking youth to see his brother. Sherif Ali could not make it out, but he played for safety.

He waited until night-time to send Lawrence on his journey, gave him an Arab head-dress to wear, and a cloak to hide the strange uniform. He mounted him on his own camel, and gave him two of his own men as guides and guards.

Lawrence seemed to take it all quite calmly. He started off on this three-day camel ride inland, trusting to his destiny. As he rode along he thought only of the fact that he, an Englishman, was riding the old pilgrim road, the road which the Moslem pilgrims travelled to visit Mecca. It was an odd thought.

The first day's ride was monotonous and tiring along the edge of the desert, over nothing but sand, and that night Lawrence slept curled up in a hollow against the side of his camel. Another day of hard riding, with the hot sun blistering his face and making his eyes ache, made him remember that it was a long time since he had really been out in the desert. He had spent the greater part of two years in comfortable rooms and comfortable beds, and this sudden change made him think seriously of the troubles ahead.

Before they actually reached Faisal's camp he kept falling asleep in the saddle; but just as they started on the last stage, a stranger came up. He rode up by the side of Lawrence and talked as they went on. It seemed aimless, rambling talk, without purpose, and a waste of time.

The man was trying his hardest to make out this curious little figure, huddled up in Arab dress.

No ordinary man travelled as this man did. His camel was a tall, well-kept, sleek-looking animal, of a breed that only princes rode. The saddle was cushioned with fancy-coloured leather work, and it was covered with rich, luxurious rugs edged with tassels which were a glory of gay colours.

The stranger jostled as close as he could to catch a glimpse of the traveller's face, but Lawrence's headcloth was drawn across in a tight fold which

revealed the eyes only, and these were kept covered, in just the same way as a hawk hoods its eyes.

But his questions! He spoke to Lawrence in Egyptian Arabic, and received an answer in the same tongue. He jumped to the dialect of Northern Syria: Lawrence gravely returned the remark with a gentle compliment in true Syrian accents. It was the thrust and parry of a duel, the difference being that the man put his questions as if he were using a heavy army sword, while Lawrence's replies had the quickness and cleverness of a darting rapier.

Khallal, the inquisitive one, gave it up. He made his farewells in flowery phrases, and when Lawrence and his companions at last reached the place where Faisal was encamped, they found that the questioner was indeed a spy, in Turkish pay. Evidently Lawrence's caution was fully justified.

After a night's rest, with muslin veils covered over their faces to keep off the ever-buzzing insects, especially mosquitoes, Lawrence and his companions made their way in the early, cool hours of the morning to the head of the Wadi Hamra. (Wadi is the Arabic word meaning 'valley'.) As Lawrence rode to the top of a rise, he had his first view of a really large gathering of fighting Arabs.

They were encamped in an oasis which, because

of its trees and bright, fresh-looking grass, was a balm to eyes that for three days had tried in vain to hide from the glitter and glare of desert travel. Scattered in and out the trees were tents, white, grey, and black, all with their little fires sending up thin, twisting columns of smoke. Round the fires the Arabs squatted, but as the three men picked their way they rose to their feet and saluted. The guides they knew, but they regarded the mysterious figure in the centre with extreme curiosity. By his cloak and his richly saddled camel he *must* be one of the great ones of the land.

At last Lawrence was feeling a purpose in the journey. The colourful scene, picturesque in its bustle and its barbaric splendour, thrilled him, and he looked forward to his meeting with the eldest son of the King, Faisal.

As he dismounted at the door of a long, low, flat-roofed house he saw a guard standing there, with a silver-hilted sword resting lightly across his shoulder. One of the guides whispered something to him, and Lawrence was allowed to pass.

There, standing in the inner court, was the one Arabian Prince he wanted to meet. As he wrote later:

‘I felt at first glance that this was the . . . leader who would bring the Arab Revolt to full glory. Faisal looked very tall and pillar-like, very slender, in his long white silk robes and

his brown headcloth bound with a brilliant scarlet and gold cord . . . his black beard and colourless face were like a mask. . . . His hands were crossed in front of him on his dagger.'

*Seven Pillars of Wisdom*

The Prince and the daring young Englishman exchanged the politest of greetings, and Faisal led Lawrence into the inner room.

There were many silent figures sitting cross-legged round the walls of the room, and they watched with keen eyes this man who had been sent to see their Prince, this man for whom the King had spoken.

'God's mercy on you, and you had an easy journey from Rabegh?' Faisal's question to Lawrence was soft and low.

'The journey was hot, O Prince, especially for a stranger to the land.'

'You have ridden fast for a stranger.' This was a high compliment.

There was a moment's silence. Then Faisal questioned, 'Do you like our place here?'

Lawrence looked at the Prince steadily, and answered with slow, careful tones:

'Well, but it is far from Damascus!'

It was a daring thing to say, and he felt the tension in the room. He knew he had dropped what was something like a thunderbolt. It might be taken as an insult to their fighting powers, or

it might do just what he wanted it to do—make them look ahead to a goal on which they must set all their hopes and all their efforts.

That minute was a very long one for Lawrence. He was a stranger in their midst, an 'Inglishi infidel'. In this country, where life and death were very swift, a dagger from a too impetuous hand might quickly be buried in his heart, and that would be the end of his dreaming.

He fixed his gaze on Faisal, and at last the Prince lifted his head, and looking into Lawrence's grave, unsmiling face, answered gently:

'Yes, it is far, but praise be to God, there are Turks nearer than that!'

The dangerous moment was over, and Lawrence breathed more freely. He had made his first point, and struck his first blow, although it was a wordy one, for his dream of empire.

For a day or so Faisal and two or three great Arab sheikhs told Lawrence what had happened in their revolt, and gradually he built up in his mind a very clear idea of what he had in front of him.

One thing was very evident. Against the modern arms of the Turks, the Arabs were wasting the lives of their bravest men. The revolt had begun without any preparation, and all the Arabs were fighting with ancient weapons. Most of their guns were the old, muzzle-loading ones, with little range.

They were also fighting on nearly empty stomachs, and, what was worse, they had very little idea of *why* they were fighting.

A small Egyptian battery had been lent to them, but these guns were twenty years old, with an effective range of just over half a mile. The Turks had modern field-guns and howitzers, which smothered all the fire of the Egyptian battery.

The men were tired, wondering what was to happen next, and they had settled in the little valley of Hamra to rest. They would wait to see what Allah would bring.

As Lawrence listened to all this talk, half his mind was in the future. He was comparing the eagerness of these Arabs to fight, with their very real fear of heavy artillery. Guns must be found as good as the Turks'. That would give them at least equality in courage.

The men had to be held together. They fought more or less in families, father and sons using the one rifle belonging to them in turn. Then they would tire a little and go home for a few days. Faisal's army was constantly changing in this fashion.

They had been told that the King wanted each tribe to forget the old quarrels and fight together against one enemy—the Turk. The appeal of fighting and looting had held most of them in Faisal's

ranks just so long as food and gold were there. Now both were fast going.

If they could surprise and rush an outpost of the Turks, kill them and disappear into the hills, with little loss to life and much material gain to their pockets—they would fight for ever on those terms. But the Turks mostly stayed in their armed forts and towns. Their mighty cannon frightened the Arabs. To their minds, the more noise a gun made, the more destruction it caused. If they had guns which would roar with fury as the Turks' did, and blow great holes in walls and in men, they would attack and wipe this enemy from the face of the earth. Until then—they would wait!

Artillery, good rifles, food, and gold. All these were wanted, and wanted quickly, and Lawrence could see that they must be found if he were to have the slightest chance of turning this rabble—for rabble it was—into a force which could hit hard and often.

He had that most difficult job in the world—persuading individuals to play as a team. It is well known on the football field that a well-trained *team* will always win against those who play their own game and try to get through to the goal on their own, refusing the help of others and spoiling the help of others.

In this case the Turks were the well-trained

team, and in the battle at the present stage their job was to stay in their own penalty area and keep the others away from the goal. At the moment it was an easy task.

Lawrence intended to alter the plan of campaign. It was half-time. Both teams were resting. If he could talk to the Arabs and drill them into a team they had every chance of winning.

His mind made up, Lawrence did not delay in his moves. His return to the coast took him to Yenbo this time, which is farther north. There he waited until a boat put into harbour, and travelled down the coast to Jeddah. He wanted to return to Egypt, where he could talk to the Army chiefs and try to get them to see the chances in the Arab revolt.

In Jeddah he met with his first piece of luck. Admiral Wemyss was in harbour with his boat, the *Euralyus*. The Admiral had already taken an active part in the revolt. He had bombarded the Turks, and, when he could, had put landing parties ashore to help the Arabs hold on to the successes they had achieved.

Finding a sympathetic listener Lawrence told the Admiral of his discoveries and his plans, and in the talk they had together he felt strengthened in his resolve.

Crossing to the Sudan side of the Red Sea,

Lawrence made direct for Khartoum, to see Sir Reginald Wingate, who governed the Sudan. He interested him in his chances, and when at last he began his journey down the Nile to Cairo, he felt that he had made a good beginning. He knew what was wanted, and he had told the nearest really important General how help could be given.

To carry on the comparison with the football team, he felt like the trainer who had been trying to find out why they were at the bottom of the league. Now that he had picked out the weak points, and told the 'directors' (the people who mattered) how the team could be altered into a winning one, he felt he had proved his point. That job was finished.

The General Staff in Egypt thought otherwise. They may have felt that Lawrence had succeeded so well in this first difficult move that he was the best man to send back to keep things going. He gave his General all sorts of excuses—all of which amounted to one thing, that he wasn't a soldier, and he didn't like soldiering.

It was the old objection of his school-days. Things had to be done then, and he did them—but he really didn't like school. He was now in the Army, and once more there were certain things to do. If he had to do them, all right, but he wanted

them to understand quite plainly that he didn't like the Army!

General Clayton listened, and overruled everything. 'You must go back to Faisal, and carry on. That is where you are wanted.'

When Lawrence did get back to Yenbo, it was to find everything in confusion. The Turks were threatening the camp, and Faisal had rushed down with his Arabs to protect it.

Prince and student met again, but this time Lawrence was very welcome. Faisal told him of the Turkish threat, and he had to laugh as the Prince described the way he had held the road with two old guns from the Boer War, which had been sent from Egypt more for show than use.

Some of the Arabs got into a panic, and retreated, but when Faisal asked their leader afterwards why they retired, he said, quite calmly:

'We were tired of fighting, and thirsty, so we stopped to make a cup of coffee!'

The scare and the threat died down, and the year 1916 ended with Lawrence sleeping peacefully on board the *Suva* in Yenbo harbour. The Navy had hurried some boats to the threatened coast, and with the searchlights from five warships making a Turkish advance practically impossible, the enemy took fright, and held their hand.

## CHAPTER V

*How long, how long, in infinite Pursuit  
Of This and That endeavour and dispute?*

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

LAWRENCE, now that he was more or less the centre of operations, settled down earnestly to his task. He took his own statement, 'It is a long way to Damascus', as his guide, and began to make real plans.

Medina, one hundred miles inland and to the east of Yenbo, marked the beginning of the railway which ran right through to Damascus. Faisal's brother had a force camped near enough to Medina to keep the Turks quiet there. Two hundred miles up the coast was Wejh, the last big port in the Red Sea between Yenbo and the Gulf of Akaba-Wejh. With Turks in Wejh and in Medina the Arabs were between two fires. If Lawrence could keep Medina quiet and then take Wejh, it would be a big step forward.

Lawrence's costume—for he was now dressed in Arab clothes—was a magnificent one.

He wore a pair of pyjama-like trousers. Over that he had a sort of extra long shirt. Both these were made of pure silk. His cloak was finely edged with gold embroidery, and the belt round his waist

was made of gold. In this he wore a curved dagger in a golden scabbard, which was presented to him by King Hussien, and gave him the rank of a Prince.

His kafiya, or head-dress, was a square of silk, folded back to the forehead and held in place by the ageyl, or rope. This was made up entirely of silk thread, and was bound together by pure gold wire, the whole being a very costly affair. Good head-ropes could be bought in the bazaars for the equal of ten shillings or a pound in English money, but the one worn by Lawrence cost at least fifty pounds. Over forty sovereigns had been melted down to supply the gold wire!

Lawrence completed his outfit with a pair of beautiful sandals. To all outward appearance he was a veritable Prince, and the splendour of his bearing was half the battle when he spoke to the simple sheikhs of the desert.

From the beginning he saw that he would have to make all he could out of the Arab's mystified idea as to his part in the revolt.

He was too small to be accepted as an Arab, and his skin was too fair. In any case his blue eyes would give him away. Everything about him would immediately arouse suspicion—so he added to the air of mystery.

All through Arabia the story had already spread of a wonderful and mysterious man who was going

to lead the Arabs to victory, and who was 'brother' to their own Prince Faisal. This man was sacred to the Arabs. He would always be known by his robes of white, and his gold-braided head-dress.

But Lawrence went farther than this. Bravery counted with the Arabs. They would always worship a brave man. He set himself a mark. He would show them that he could ride their camels as well as they; endure the heat and hardship of the trail with the best of them; fight, when the need came, as bravely as they did; and use their arms with equal skill. In some cases he proved himself their master, and all this contributed to their belief in what to their simple minds was nothing else but magic.

This miniature of a man, compared with their standards of physique, was a fighting and riding fury. He spoke their tongue, and knew their ways. He shared their life with them, yet there was so much mystery in his sudden arrival in their midst that from the time he adopted their native dress Lawrence became their idol, a man to be followed and to be worshipped, a man they could die for.

So Lawrence took the lead. The march on Wejh was agreed to, and the first few days in January 1917 were spent in preparation for the long trek up the forbidding and dreary desert coast.

There was something symbolic to Lawrence

about this first march north, and as he rode with Faisal at the head of the Arabs he looked back at a scene which surely came from the *Arabian Nights*.

They were a motley crew. All the camels flaunted gaily-blanketed saddles, and from the kaleidoscope of colour there rose a constant murmur, like the surging of surf against rock. The tempo of the march was timed to the beat of the drums. *T-t-tum-tum-tum, t-t-tum-tum-tum* they throbbed, and through the dust could be seen the bobbing heads of the riders, as colourful as a field of mixed tulips.

Again and again a wave of song would sweep from one wing of the army to the other and up and down the centre. The camels increased their pace, and the song rose to a shrill note of triumph while the Arabs swung their great crimson banners high in the wind.

The start was an easy one, but Lawrence gazed forward curiously at two riders who were coming in from the flank, on horseback. One was an Arab, but the other *looked* strange, and as the form came nearer he recognized with delight that it was Colonel Newcombe, his old-time chief.

Colonel Newcombe changed from horse to camel, and the two Englishmen rode on, happy in each other's company. It was a good meeting,

for the way began to grow difficult. The road was not a familiar one, even to the Arabs, and there was no certainty about the wells and food.

The first rain of the season came as a welcome relief the next morning, and the army, now increased by local tribesmen swelling the ranks, felt a little refreshed. Camel-men mixed with those on foot, while here and there were small groups on horseback. The majority of the men were in the Arab cloak and shirt, but some of the more regular troops wore khaki tunics and riding-breeches, the only thing in common being the head-dress.

One odd contingent, in charge of the guns—the twenty-year-old show pieces—had among it a man swathed in a fur-lined coat, which he had taken from a German officer! He must have paid a big price in comfort in return for the ‘honour’ of wearing it, for the average temperature was  $110^{\circ}$  in the shade.

The main contingent kept up a steady jog-trot, all bunched together, but on the outskirts some of the wilder spirits were racing about chasing lizards and birds, trying to knock them over with sticks. Colonel Newcombe had now left Lawrence, having departed for another of his raids.

In the evening, when the halt was called, practically the whole army bathed, men mixed with

camels. It was a noisy, happy crowd, more like a school picnic than anything else.

The march up the coast was having the effect Lawrence desired. Never before had the country witnessed such an army.

'Who is it?' was the constant question, and back would come the triumphant answer: 'It is Faisal and his men, and we march on Wejh!'

So the news went forward, and the enthusiasm of the men swamped the minor tragedies of the trek. Water was there, but it could never be enough for the thousands of camels and men. Food was there, but not in sufficient quantities to give the men a full feed. Here and there men and animals dropped out, exhausted with the privations of the march, and there were many deaths, more from thirst than anything else.

But there was a motive in this mighty throng. It seemed to the simple Arabs of the desert that the whole world was moving, and it was moving against the Turks. Each stage saw other stragglers coming in, this and that Sheikh bringing in his followers and swearing loyalty to Faisal and Lawrence.

The march lagged behind a bit because of its size, and a cold north wind carried down to the dogged Arabs the sound of guns.

The speed of the army could not, however, be

increased, and when at last Wejh came in sight, the *Hardinge* signalled that it had fallen to a mixed party of seamen and Arabs.

Curious as to what the Navy had done, Lawrence went on board the *Hardinge*, and heard from its captain how the capture had been effected.

Captain Boyle grinned as he told him the story. They kept to the time-table because they wanted to catch the Turks in the town. Having prepared a landing party, made up of all the seamen, marines, and stokers he could spare, together with some five hundred Arabs he was carrying on the boat, he had pounded Wejh with a heavy bombardment from the guns. The landing party had then rushed the town and cleared it of the enemy. It was hand-to-hand fighting, and very hot work.

There had been one unfortunate casualty. A lieutenant in the Royal Naval Air Service, engaged in 'spotting' for the Navy, was hit by a piece of shrapnel, and he died before the machine could land.

The Turkish garrison had fought bitterly, for, as Lawrence heard later, their Governor had deserted them.

He had given the garrison their orders.

'Fight to your last drop of blood! Wejh must not be taken!'

Having said this, he waited for nightfall, and

then fled, leaving the garrison to their fate. He meant to save *his* 'last drop of blood'.

For all that, Wejh had fallen. To the Arabs marching in Faisal's army it was just the will of Allah that they had no fighting to do. The place was there to be looted, and for a few hours it was full of a yelling crowd of half-mad Arabs, who, fired with excitement, stripped every house of its riches and piled themselves up with more rugs and valuables than they could ever hope to carry.

This was the sort of war they liked—very little fighting, and plenty of reward for it. Allah be praised!

Lawrence knew that the Arabs would make their camp at Wejh, for it would have to be used as a base for some time to come. It was necessary to put the latest position to the Army chiefs in Cairo, so he went off by boat to Suez, and from there went direct to General Clayton.

He found most of the experts interested in the revolt together, and, armed with the news of this last success, told them quite shortly that if they would help with arms (particularly long-range artillery), food, and money, he could raise the whole country and sweep the Turks out of Arabia from Mecca to Damascus.

Head-quarters, however, were too much occupied with their troubles in Palestine to get

excited about this 'side-show', as they called it. To keep the Arab Bureau (as it was then known) quiet, they made many promises of rifles, money, and guns, but they did not keep them, and Lawrence spent his days going from this to that General, trying to drive into them what the Arab revolt could do.

One significant fact was brought home to the authorities. The Turks themselves were much disturbed by the progress Lawrence had made. What they had formerly felt to be a 'tin-pot revolution' had very quickly swept up the coast and captured all the ports. This meant a direct threat to the Hejaz railway line, the one line they must keep going if they wanted to move reinforcements with ease.

But Lawrence did not meet with much success, and for the time being he determined to go back to Faisal and his army in Wejh, to see what could be done with the men there. At least *they* would follow him if he made the fighting sound attractive enough.

The little town had changed. On either side of it, running up from the shore on a gentle rise, Faisal's army had made its home. Behind the regular lines of the Sherifian troops came the thousands of tents of the Arabs, scattered higgledy-piggledy in every hollow. Beyond them was the

constant movement of camel caravans, wandering in and out with the excited tribesmen from inland, attracted by the news which had now swept the country from end to end.

To the north of the town were the precise lines of the English and Egyptian army camps, to which he would wander now and again for a talk with his own people.

Lawrence had succeeded in getting one or two English officers and soldiers lent to him for help in the base, to run the supplies and repair rifles, &c.

War or no war, the Arabs could never resist firing their rifles or revolvers in the air as a sign of joy, and there was plenty of excitement from the falling bullets. One band found a seaplane bomb, and they fiddled too long with it. In the explosion many were killed.

Now and again men's racial hatred would get the upper hand on seeing others of the tribes they used to fight, and many an old score was wiped out.

In and out these constantly changing scenes of camp-life Lawrence picked his way, admitted by all to their camp-fires. He was for ever asking questions, especially of the men who came from the north, up in the hills. Slowly but surely he was fashioning reality out of his old dreams.

The enthusiasm aroused by the last success was

so great that many of the Arabs wished to rush through the country right away, burning and looting as they went. It was not easy for Lawrence to check these impulses, for this was the natural fighting life of the Arab. He talked for long hours with Faisal, coaching him in the chances of the campaign, asking him to wait until the great tribes of the centre and the north had offered definite assistance and loyalty to his cause.

Messengers were sent out from Wejh to the sheikhs of the desert, armed with messages calling them to help the great and mighty King of the Hejaz and his sons to turn the hated Turks from their beloved country.

Most of them usually added a little to the letters they carried by telling each camp of the wonderful man who rode at Faisal's right hand, a man who came and went when he wished, who was known to the great ones of the mighty Inglisi nation, who wielded great power.

'He is not of us,' they would say, 'but he knows us and our tongue, and lives like us.'

'Then who is he?'

'A Prince, maybe: we do not know. What we know is that he has blue eyes!'

No Arab had blue eyes, and this set the seal of magic on Lawrence. All Arabia surrounded him with legendary might, and even the Turks began

to take some notice of what they had thought to be idle talk. They sent their spies to find out what was behind these stories of a mysterious leader. They met with little success. They could hear plenty about this mystery man, but they never saw him.

Meanwhile Faisal, following Lawrence's advice, was receiving the Sheikhs as they came to his camp to offer their services. He made them swear on the Koran (their Bible) to forget their feuds, and to fight together with all those who spoke Arabic for the freedom of the Arab nation.

Lawrence had chosen rightly when he selected Faisal to be the leader in this work. Faisal, amused at first when he saw Lawrence at Jeddah, began to have a great respect for his uncanny, even wonderful, manner with men. He knew his countrymen would follow this quiet Englishman if only for his bravery, and he remembered with a smile what he had first said when the message came to Jeddah, when he spoke of seeing 'a man named Lawrence'.

Two English soldiers were being kept very busy in the Ordnance Camp. They had been sent down to help the Arabs with their arms, and their cleverness was tested by every rifle or revolver that was brought to them for repair.

Some of them were so old that they were held together merely with bands of tin fastened round the barrel. There was so much wrong with most

of them that it was a marvel they ever fired a shot. The Ordnance men felt as though they were in a mad world, and that all the museum pieces were being handed in to be made suitable for modern warfare.

Some burst as they were tested. Others dropped to pieces. On some the trigger was tied in place by a piece of string or wire. On others there were no sights. The barrels of some were the slightest bit bent; not much, but enough to make accurate shooting impossible.

So the procession went on. Now and again some lordly sheikh walked up and presented his weapon for repair. The arms of such a man were usually known by the richness of the inlaid silver in the stocks.

Once or twice a rare sword came in to be tempered, a lovely, ringing piece of steel hundreds of years old, that was every bit as good as some of the treasures so jealously guarded by collectors.

On another occasion a scimitar was brought in, the wicked curved blade of death so favoured by the Eastern races, and when it was shown to Lawrence he knew, as he handled it, that it was a magnificently preserved specimen from the Middle Ages.

It made him think once more of this mob which called itself an army. The rifles were anything from

twenty to one hundred years old. So were the revolvers. The other arms were daggers, swords, and spears.

It was with this army that he was daring to challenge the might of the Turks. The Arabs could go home when they wished. They could fight when they wished. They thought nothing of stopping a fight to have a cup of coffee.

And they would think nothing of cutting his throat if they got tired of him.

They were moody for lack of fighting at the moment, and were getting touchy. They wanted action, and he would have to get them off on some raid or other which would revive their tiring spirits.

Action! That was the keyword.

Lawrence had had time to study the situation very closely, and he turned against one idea that was being pushed forward by other advisers. They were in favour of a direct attack on Medina, the junction to the railway.

This he considered to be a waste of time. In any case he thought they were not nearly strong enough to capture such a large town, which would be strongly fortified, and which the Turks had orders to hold at all costs.

He felt that it would be just as easy to keep a fairly large force near Medina. The Turks would not come out to attack it because they could not



“It is a long way to  
Damascus”—a street in  
Damascus, the Arab goal.



Dust Devil '—a sandstorm, rising, pile upon pile,  
above a desert town.





'He was a real robber chief' — Auda Abu Tayi (right) in his tent.

afford the men, and there was no need for the Arabs to attack so long as they kept the Turks 'bottled up'. This was an easy way to conduct war, and it was in keeping with Lawrence's methods.

He was a little happier now, as the British headquarters had kept some of their promises. They sent armoured cars down to Wejh, and more Egyptian troops. They also sent Colonel Joyce. He proved a direct contrast to Lawrence, and he was a giant of a man, standing six feet four inches high. The Arabs laughed a little when they saw them together.

Back in the Arab camp, as Lawrence and Faisal were talking, an Arab hurried in and whispered something to the Prince.

Faisal turned to Lawrence: 'Auda is here,' he said. His usual calm self was forgotten. The arrival of one of Arabia's greatest fighters, obviously to offer his help, was a real feather in their cap.

Lawrence knew the name, and he repeated it—'Auda abu Tayi' just as the tent-flap opened.

There, standing looking at them, was a tall, hook-nosed, fine-looking man, with a beard and fierce moustache.

'Our Lord, Commander of the Faithful,' he said in a deep voice as he went forward, took Faisal's hand and kissed it. Behind Auda stood his son, a boy of eleven. He was armed, and carried a

rifle, and some said that he had already killed enemies of the tribe.

To Lawrence, Auda's arrival meant a lot. His next move, crazy to most others, had been at the back of his mind for some time, but even to him it did not seem that he could do anything about it.

The best base in all Arabia was Akaba, an old seaport, famous as a port in Roman days, and before that in the days of King Solomon. From there caravans could and did go to all parts, and its capture would mean that the Turks would have to go back to the railway, and stop there if they wanted to be safe.

But Akaba was a difficult nut to crack. It lay at the extreme end of the Gulf of Akaba, and the Turks realized its importance. It had been strengthened by earthworks and trenches. Even if the Navy helped in an attack from the sea, it would be very difficult to carry the port, as there were no real landings. It would take a very big force if they landed troops lower down and marched up the coast. Operations such as these were a task for really trained troops, and could not be carried out by undisciplined Arabs.

In effect, this put the idea of attack from the sea entirely out of the question. Lawrence, therefore, had another plan. He knew Akaba and the surrounding country very well. He remembered

his explorations there before the War, and the little paths he had found leading over what to other people were impassable ranges of hills. He had found secret, one-track paths that had been used hundreds of years ago, and forgotten.

Remembering these, he was thinking of making a long march, crossing through the enemy lines, going up hundreds of miles behind their defences and then coming down to Akaba from inland. It was a five-hundred-mile circle, possible only to picked, strong men, and would take weeks to carry out. It was rather like going from London to Wales via Scotland.

The reason which drove Lawrence to this plan was his theory of military tactics—surprise. The enemy would keep their eyes on the sea, and to attack them from the sea would cost the lives of many men. Therefore, he would attack them from the rear, where they least expected it!

The more he thought it out, the more he liked it, and as this great Arab chief, Auda abu Tayi, had come in to help, he would ask him to help, for he was perhaps the most famous fighter of them all.

This and many like thoughts were passing through Lawrence's mind as he and the other Arab chiefs sat down to supper. He told them what could be done with dynamite in blowing up the railway, and they were all feeling very joyful.

Then came a shout from Auda.

‘Allah forbid!’ he boomed at the top of his voice, and ran from the tent.

They could all hear a hammering noise going on outside, and Lawrence went to find out what this strange behaviour meant.

Auda had taken his false teeth out of his mouth. He had them on a large rock, and was breaking them to pieces with another rock, swearing fiercely all the time.

‘What ails thee?’ asked Lawrence.

‘Allah forgive me, but I had forgotten!’

‘Forgotten what?’ continued Lawrence.

‘Forgotten that I was eating my Lord’s food with teeth given me by a Turkish general!’ He spat as he said it.

It was carrying his hatred of the Turks, and his loyalty to Faisal, a long way, for he hardly had any teeth of his own, and he had to wait many weeks before it was possible to get him a new set.

During the supper Lawrence found out what manner of man this Auda was. He had known of him as the chief of the Howeitat tribe, but had not heard many details of his life.

In his own camp, he kept open house. The poor never went hungry. In fact, he fed his guests too well! He made them uncomfortably full.

He had had twenty-eight wives, and he was not

yet sixty years of age. He had always been fighting, mostly against enemy tribes, and in single-handed combat had killed seventy-five men, all Arabs. They had all been killed in battle, man to man. He did not trouble about the Turks he had killed. They did not count as men, he said, and he had forgotten their number.

He was a real robber chief, an enemy to all those round him so that he could have a good excuse to attack them when he felt like it. His biggest trouble was his anger, which no man could stop. He was very obstinate, and would not move from his purpose, even though he had been proved wrong. Altogether, his was a hard nature, but for all that he was loved by every one, because he really had the heart and soul and the simple ways of a child.

This was the man Lawrence wanted for his partner in his great raid, and his arrival, coming in the middle of his planning, made him more determined than ever to carry it out.



## CHAPTER VI

*For in and out, above, about, below,  
'Tis nothing but a Magic Shadow-show . . .*

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

IT took him a little time to perfect his idea. He first of all had to throw cold water, very cold water, on the plan for attacking Medina. He also had to get some approval—he was going on even if he didn't get it!—from Head-quarters for his other idea. He wrote out a report, and the other adviser wrote another, condemning it. Not to be outdone, he sailed for Egypt and took his report with him, to argue the matter out personally.

This was at the end of April 1917, and by the beginning of May he was back in Wejh. It seemed that he was to have his own way, for the attack on Medina was not coming off, and he was going away, 'for some time'.

He had many talks with Auda, and on May 9th everything was ready.

They rode away in the afternoon, and despite the knowledge of the long trek in front of them, Lawrence and his new Arab comrade, Auda, were very cheerful. Auda never spoke in a whisper, nor laughed quietly, and his voice boomed out joyfully as the first stage progressed.

Riding a camel is a thing that does not come easily to Europeans. At the trot the movement is a quick, jerky one, and this gradually changes to a swift rolling movement when going at speed. Most of the guiding is done with a cane, and you tap the camel on the opposite side of the neck to that in which she should turn. For instance, if you want her to go left, you touch the right side of her neck.

Mounting and dismounting are always a choice of moving quickly, or being thrown off, and if you want to keep your camel within easy reach you tie the halter-rope round one of the bent forelegs. The camel can get up if she wants to, but she can only hop about on three legs, and that makes the task of catching her quite easy.

From the beginning, the march, mostly through barren, desolate land, was very hot. Not only did the Arabs feel it from overhead, but the heat came back from the sides of the narrow valleys through which they rode. It was like going through an extended Turkish bath, and the sight of the palms at El Kurr at the end of the second day was an immense relief.

There was a small camp here, but only one old man and his daughters lived in this little green garden, tucked away in the desert. His people before him had tilled the same ground and kept the same well for centuries, and he did just as they did, using the same implements.

It was a pleasant spot, and as Lawrence could not see one particular chief for two days, they stayed at El Kurr for two nights.

Each night there was a concert, of sorts. Two of the soldiers who were staying at the camp had guitars, and, sitting round the camp-fires, they played them each evening, singing the songs of their own Syrian country.

The next day, or rather at two o'clock in the morning, they started again, and by five o'clock were climbing and scrambling up what was nothing more than a goat-path. In the end they had to get off the camels and push and pull them up. Two camels fell and broke their legs, and they were immediately killed and cut up on the spot. They would be useful as meat later on!

As steeply as they climbed, so they began to descend, and they camped at last in a deep, shadowy valley. There they had time for another rest, and Lawrence found it so peaceful that he climbed to a little ledge and lay there, dreaming.

England seemed so very far away, and he wondered as he dreamed just where this mad journey of his would really end, and when.

Down in the valley in the evening Lawrence and Auda waited for the messenger who would say they could go on, and the next day Auda guided them out. 'Guided' was the right word, for they

climbed in and out, up and down, round in circles, through one opening in the rocks into still deeper shadows, and then into staring, stabbing sunlight. It seemed impossible, in this country which all looked alike, through which there seemed no sign of a path, that Auda could find his way, but he did not falter. At last, topping a rise, they saw the thin ribbon of the railway a long way ahead. There was, however, another sight which pulled them up short.

Some riders were coming in from the railway.

Lawrence rode up to Auda.

‘Are they friends?’ he asked.

Auda said nothing. His hands were on his rifle, crossed over the saddle of his camel. He was ready, whoever they were.

Lawrence dropped his right hand to his revolver.

As the two little groups approached, however, those in front were seen to be of the Arab forces, and, nearer still, the first rider proved himself to be a wild-looking, ginger-bearded English officer named Hornby. Lawrence had heard that he had been busy helping to blow up some parts of the railway, and was delighted to meet him.

It was the first time they had met, and after an exchange of greetings, they passed on, two lonely Englishmen, carrying on their little share in the Great War with all the odds against them.

The next day the party were at the railway, and

hasty preparations were made to blow up a section. It was Auda's first experience with dynamite, and he cheered and laughed as each charge went off, sending the rails flying into the air.

Lawrence and the others then had one last drink, filled their water-skins, and were ready for the worst part of their journey, over what was called the desert of El Houl.

For two days, with very little sleep in between, they fought their way across this desolate waste. It was flat, and a hot, dry wind kept the dust constantly blowing into their faces.

The caravan was strung out for about two miles, and as they went forward a mirage would occasionally form, tormenting the men with visions of riders swimming through great cool lakes. So tired did Lawrence's eyes get that he could not be certain whether he saw real things or mirages. He had been trying to count his men to see if they were all there, and two or three times thought he was one short.

In the end he rode right up to the head of the caravan, and to his dismay found that his counting had been right.

One of the Arabs was leading a riderless camel!

Lawrence was very angry. He had not been told about this, and he hated the idea of a man lost and suffering.

'That is Gasim's camel,' he said. 'Where is he?'

'How do I know, Lord,' answered the man. From one to the other Lawrence passed, asking for news about Gasim, and in the end they had to admit that the man must be lost.

Lawrence did not know what to do. The man might be miles back, in fact he might even now be dead with thirst. To send any one to look for him might mean that he, too, would be lost. They were all weak through lack of water and food, and the terrible crossing had taken nearly all their strength.

The others really did not care about attempting a rescue. The man had no claim on them, they said, and was not worth worrying about!

Lawrence thought it over. He was really their leader, and he felt that he must himself turn back and try to find the foolish man.

He did not feel he was being a hero about it. If he was leader, should he risk his life, as he certainly would be doing, to find a worthless Arab who was probably already dead?

Even as he argued with himself he had turned his camel back the way they had come, and after about two hours a figure appeared in the dancing heat ahead of him.

Was it yet another of those deceiving mirages, was it a bush, or was it a man?

Lawrence called out, and in answer saw a feeble waving of arms. It was his man! He urged his mount forward, and, picking up the half-blinded and thirst-maddened Gasim, slung him across the camel and turned once more in the path of the party.

Soon other forms danced up out of the haze. Auda and two others had come back to look for Lawrence, and while they were glad in a way that Gasim had been found, he was roundly cursed for so nearly causing the loss of their 'great leader'. As they also cursed Lawrence for risking his life on so worthless a fool, the honours were about equal.

Except for the very hard travelling, this had been the most exciting incident of the journey, which had now taken fifteen days. The evening ended in something approaching a sandstorm, the sand biting through the clothing and hitting the skin like so many pieces of hard grit. To add to their troubles they were now completely out of water. This meant that it would be foolish to eat, for that would only make them thirstier.

So they ate nothing and drank nothing, with Lawrence hoping that the promise of arrival at an oasis the next day would be fulfilled. He was now getting used to the wear and tear of desert life. His body was hard, like whipcord, and the softness which had come upon him in Cairo had gone.

After a short rest in the cool of the night, the raiders pushed their mounts hard, yet carefully, to reach the underground well which was about fifty miles farther up the valley of the Sirhan.

Suddenly, the comparative peace of the ride was broken. There was a scatter of shots from a mound to their side, and one of their men toppled off, with a shrill, unearthly cry. He was dead before he hit the ground, with a bullet through his head. Lawrence pulled his men up short and hurriedly dismounted, putting his camel between them and the line of fire.

Comrades of the dead man, however, did not wait. They charged in the direction from which the shot had sounded, and rounded the sandhill with a shout; but when they turned the corner all they could see was a disappearing cloud of dust marking the flight of the attacking party.

Very little notice was taken of the affair. Arabs who travelled strange country, or who travelled at all, were always prepared for attack, and it was just the will of Allah that an unlucky bullet should find their comrade. He was buried underneath a pile of stones, to protect his body from marauding animals, and the party passed on. The incident made Lawrence thoughtful, as it was the first hostile shot which had been fired against them since their departure from Wejh.

However, the well was quickly reached, and while they camped there, the long-looked-for messenger arrived with the news that all Auda abu Tayi's tribe were camped in the valley in front.

The first part of the journey was over. The next thing was to perfect the plan for the encircling ride to Akaba. Lawrence was not yet sure of the friendliness of the country through which he had to go, and the Sheikh who ruled over the long Sirhan valley would have to be 'persuaded' to help them. Auda himself was sent off to see the Sheikh, and Lawrence stuffed six bags of gold in his saddle-bags to help in the 'persuasion'.

For a week Lawrence was the guest of honour in the Howeitat camp, and for the first three days it was eating, talking, drinking, and sleeping.

On the third day they moved on up the Sirhan. Although previously they had only been troubled by one or two snakes, those on foot had now to spend most of their time beating the low brush with sticks. At night the snakes would come up and coil in the blankets in which the men were sleeping, so that getting up in the morning was a ticklish job: they could never be certain they had not had a snake for a bed-fellow.

Except for the snakes, the journey was without any major incident, and at the beginning of June Auda rejoined Lawrence, with the welcome news

that the country in front was open to them, at any rate where the Turks had no camps.

Lawrence had been thinking seriously of the immediate future. The attack on Akaba was one thing, but he had to make sure that all the country, right up to the borders of Mesopotamia, was disposed to rise and help in beating the Turks. In a time like this, when gold was flowing easily, and the Turks themselves were beginning to offer large sums for information, it was a risk asking others to visit the sheikhs in the north.

It meant a long journey of fourteen or fifteen days through an area full of enemies, and there was only one way to get the information, to find out what these people were thinking. That meant that Lawrence must go himself. The trouble was that the Arabs wanted him to stay with them, and he would have to slip off secretly.

No one knows just what happened from the 3rd to the 18th of June. When the Arabs reached Nebk, at the northern end of the Sirhan valley, Lawrence disappeared. When he returned, it was as if he had been for an afternoon stroll. One minute the camp was without news of him; the next he was sitting in the tent, warding off the questions they showered on him.

'I have been to Baalbek.' That was all he would say.

In that sentence, however, was the history of a ride of something like five hundred miles. He had been in and out of Turkish camps and garrisons, and in and out of the company of German officers.

He must have run incredible risks, for spies were quickly hanged or shot, after being subjected to horrible torture to force them to tell some of their secrets.

He discussed future plans with German staff head-quarters, and came away with information which was to prove extremely valuable in later months. He mixed with the Turks, and joined in their heated discussions as to what they would do with 'this Arab rabble which was creating a scare in the south'.

He agreed quite calmly that 'the mad Englishman' who was causing such a lot of trouble should be given a very rough time when he was caught, 'as caught he will be, soon'.

He spent some hours in Damascus, and then wandered a little in the country of the Druse, selling and buying stores which he did not possess, pretending to be a grain merchant. In one Turkish camp, seeing no other way of getting information, he disguised himself as a woman.

He spent all the sixteen days in hostile country, mixing with men who would have been willing to betray him for a few sovereigns. He carried his

life in his hand from the moment he left the protection of the Arabs until he returned, and all he could say about it was:

‘I have been to Baalbek.’

It was rather like the answer a boy would give to his mother after he had been missing for a while. You could imagine her saying: ‘Where have you been?’ and the usual answer, given by boys of all ages and all countries: ‘Oh, just playing!’

But enough time had been used in preparations and talks, and the day after Lawrence returned from his mysterious ride the next stage to Akaba was begun.

The party consisted of five hundred picked men, all hard riders and skilled desert fighters. The ride to the next supply of water—Bair—was a swift one, but Lawrence was unpleasantly surprised to find that two of the wells had been blown up by the Turks and dead camels thrown in to poison the water. The enemy evidently suspected the numbers of Arabs that had been gathering in the Sirhan, and were attempting to stop their movements by destroying the supplies of water in the district.

This meant another delay. Messengers had to be sent south to find what damage the Turks were doing, and to buy the friendship of the tribes who held the route to Akaba itself. Lawrence pushed on to Jefer, and found the wells there partly

destroyed, and still more precious time was used up in restoring as much as they could of the water supply.

Water was the most important thing. Food could be forgotten for a time, but water was their life-blood, and each destroyed well meant a possibility of death being very much nearer.

Working feverishly, they cleared away the rubbish and stones blown down into the wells by the charge of dynamite, and at long last they were able to get at the water, much to the relief of the men and their camels.

This unwonted activity on the part of the Turks had to be countered, so Lawrence arranged for an immediate raid on the railway, to turn the attention of the enemy from the Arabs in the desert to trouble a little nearer their own doorstep.

It was a rather comic situation. The Turks had blown up the wells. 'Ah,' they were saying to themselves, 'that is the end of those raiding Arabs', and the garrison in Ma'an, just a few miles away, were very well pleased with the position. Their cavalry had gone to the valley of the Sirhan to teach the impudent Arabs a lesson. That would be all that was necessary.

What they did not know was that the Arabs had slipped away, and that the cavalry were on a wild goose-chase.

They also did not know that the despised Arabs were actually at the wells, with a good supply of water.

With all possible speed Lawrence made for the railway station of Ghadir el Haj, a few miles south of Ma'an, and the little garrison had no time to get over their surprise at seeing five hundred yelling Arabs sweeping down on them. They fled into the block-house in the station, and had to watch Lawrence at work.

He spread his stock of explosives so that there was sufficient to blow up ten bridges and the line in between. As each one went up in a shower of stone and dust, the Turkish posts north and south heard the thunder of the explosions and went frantic. The officer in the station, powerless to stop Lawrence, was sending panicky messages in morse up and down the line. 'Thousands of Arabs attacking us. Line destroyed and bridges blown up. Help!'

This was just what Lawrence wanted. If he could get the Turks running up and down the line, he could cut right across to a very important post called Aba el Lissan, right away from the line. This guarded a pass called the Negb el Shtar, and while it was in enemy hands it was practically impossible for Lawrence to get to Akaba as he wished.

The Negb was a hill down which a narrow path

ran steeply, only a few feet wide. It was so steep that it went down zigzag fashion, and on either side were sheer drops into deep gorges. A slip meant a fall to death hundreds of feet below.

With the Turks in charge of the pass Lawrence could not get down to the plain which marked the road to Akaba. If he could capture it, it cleared a way for him, and the Turks would have to retreat to the line.

It sounded fairly easy, but Lawrence had a nasty shock when he heard that instead of a small troop guarding Aba el Lissan, a whole Turkish battalion was there, about 900 strong, strengthened by machine-guns.

This was a very hard nut to crack, but Lawrence was not dismayed. The Turks were disciplined men, trained to fighting in trenches and block-houses. The Arabs were experts at guerrilla warfare, sniping, hit-and-run methods. He would use them to wear down gradually the Turks until he got them on the run.

As the Turks slept in peace on the grassy slopes of their camp, Lawrence split his force up and sent parties to take up sniping positions on the surrounding hills. It was the chill hour of dawn, and he waited the return of a messenger to say that the telegraph lines on the railway had been cut. That would stop any more calls for help!

Back came the news he wanted, up went his rifle to his shoulder, and at his first shot into the enemy camp the Arabs started their sniping.

With shouts and yells the Turks tumbled pell-mell out of their tents and blankets, but Lawrence had another surprise coming to him. They had mountain guns with them.

These were soon in action, but the Arabs laughed at the bursting shells. They moved from rock to rock, never staying in one position to make a mark.

Here and there a Turk would throw up his arms and topple to the ground, dead. Others would crawl away to nurse their wounds.

The cool air of the morning was gone now. Rocks got too hot for shelter, and rifles too hot to hold because of the constant firing.

The constant running from rock to rock to give the Turks the idea that the hills were full of men was also no easy job. Even the Arabs were fast getting exhausted, and water-bottles were nearly empty.

But Lawrence had to fight on, despite the torture of fighting under a fierce sun. As the men rested on rocks to take aim, the heat of the ground burnt their flesh, and the metal on the rifles was even hotter.

The Arabs were not getting off scot free. Sprawling legs behind a rock, or arms hanging loosely

over a ridge, were mute witnesses of the toll taken in their fight for freedom.

Thirsty, Lawrence rolled behind a rock to seek the shelter of its shadow, and just at that moment old Auda came up and mocked him.

‘What is this—all talk and no work?’

Lawrence answered angrily, for the heat was making all tempers short, ‘No, it is just that your men shoot a lot and hit a little!’

Auda burst into one of his great rages.

He tore away up the hill, shouting for his horse. Some of his men followed. Lawrence scrambled up to the top of the hill where Auda stood, swearing dreadfully.

‘Well, what now?’ he asked.

‘Follow on your camels if you want to see what the old man can do!’

Before he could be stopped he had mounted, and about fifty other horsemen did the same. Lawrence rushed to where the camels stood, calling his men off from the hills. They ran in, all excited, and just as they mounted there was a shrill shout, and Auda went flashing by, downhill, in a headlong charge on the Turks.

There was only one thing to be done. It looked like suicide, but Auda had to be supported. Lawrence pointed down—he was too breathless to shout—and the camels were prodded into a mad charge.

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Bullets came spitting up the hill. Among the ranks of the horsemen in front there were ominous gaps, and now the camel-men were beginning to get in the thick of the flying lead. On either side of Lawrence men threw up their hands with loud cries to Allah and fell, suddenly, horribly, to be pounded by the thudding pads of the maddened camels. It was no time for red-cross work. Those who fell, fell.

The enemy were in front, and still holding their ranks. The horsemen hit them, went through them, and, wheeling, charged at their flanks. The camel-men, led by Lawrence, went smashing through, and, turning to right and left, folded the Turks between them. It was quick, short work. What before seemed a hopeless charge was turned into victory, and in very little time there were over three hundred dead sprawled over the slopes, and nearly two hundred prisoners huddled near the remains of their camp. The others were fleeing through the narrow valleys, away back to the railway, with yelling Arabs hard on their heels, thirsting for vengeance!

Lawrence breathed deeply in relief. The mad charge to death, following Auda's outburst, had seemed the end of his scheming: he could hardly believe that in that short hour the firm ranks of the Turks had been turned into a shambles of death and destruction.

The way to Akaba was open!

Auda came up, crazed with the thrill of the charge and the lust of killing. There were bullet holes in his pistol holster, his field-glasses were shattered, and his sword scabbard hung in ribbons. One horse had been shot under him, and he had carried on his killing on foot. There were the holes of half a dozen bullets through his clothes, but, marvellous to relate, he had come through without a scratch.

For some hours the Arabs moved in and out the Turkish camp, searching for loot, and taking the uniforms from the dead. The result was that in the morning most of the men were wearing soldier's tunics over their long Arab dresses, a rifle slung over each shoulder, some with two or more revolvers, and others with knives as well. They were each and every one walking arsenals!

There was one guard to a very narrow valley yet to be taken before Lawrence could begin his last advance to Akaba. It did not look an easy thing, for the post lay right on the top of a cliff, and if a machine-gun were there many men would be lost before a storming party could get to the top.

This was just another instance of Lawrence's uncanny ability to turn any odd incident to advantage.

As the Arabs viewed the post they pointed to the clear view the moonlight gave to any observers on top of the cliff, and said, quite bluntly, that it would be madness to try an attack.

Lawrence laughed. 'We shall take the post to-night,' he said.

The Arabs looked at him, doubtfully.

'In an hour, the light of the moon will be hidden, and then we will attack.'

Once again the Arabs looked their doubt. The sky was a cold, brilliant expanse, without a cloud in sight.

Lawrence persisted. 'O scoffers, I tell thee there will be no moon! For a space it will go from the face of the heavens, and the enemy will fall into our hands.' Lawrence knew that an eclipse was due that night.

It was a weird scene. The Arabs had such a belief in anything that Lawrence said or did that, against all their better judgement, they waited in the shadow of the cliffs to see what came of this promised magic.

The hour passed, and still no cloud appeared in the sky. Suddenly, one of the Arabs pointed upwards. There was a shadow on the moon, like the curve of a scimitar. Open-mouthed, the natives watched. The shadow grew, and they turned to look at their leader.

Lawrence nodded, as if to say, 'I told you so.'

But the superstitious Turks on the top of the hill had also noticed the shadow. To them it was disaster. Out of a cloudless night some great evil was removing the light of their moon. Noise is supposed to be a great charm against evil, and they stood outside their lonely post, banging loudly on pots and pans, and shouting at the top of their voices.

They also fired their rifles at the shadow of evil. Slowly but surely, despite all their prayers and curses and noise, the moon was blotted out. As the shadow darkened Lawrence led his men up the narrow path, and at the very moment when the Turks were at the limit of their fright, for the moon had gone out of the sky, more ominous shadows gathered round them. Their soldiering was ended.

This exploit of Lawrence's was spread throughout the Arabs' camps. Surely this leader of theirs must be more than mere man. Even the heavens were under his command. The moon was too bright for him, so he shut out its light. By Allah! A man who could do this could do anything!

As the Arabs advanced, now taking care to go forward in silence, with a close survey of each view as they topped a ridge, Lawrence was pleased to find his plan developing as he had hoped it would.

All the Turkish troops had been called in to Akaba and its outposts. They *were* fearing an attack—but from the sea.

Very carefully Lawrence shepherded his men through the Wadi Ithm until they were massed for action. In twos and threes the hillmen, attracted by the news of battle, and by the reports of Arab triumphs which were now spreading through the little camps, were joining up.

Lawrence did not want any more useless fighting. He hated losing men, and hated as much to be directly responsible for causing death.

He got in touch with a Turkish officer under cover of the white flag—after two other messengers with white flags had been shot—and spoke to him. The Turkish officer, showing both astonishment and a little fear, eyed the menacing forces behind Lawrence.

‘You see,’ said the latter, ‘we are strong, and we grow stronger each minute. You cannot get back, and you cannot go forward.’

He allowed this obvious fact to sink in. Then he added, quite casually: ‘My men are getting angry. They do not like Turks!’

The officer looked at the small, gentle-faced but hard-eyed man in front of him. The threat in his words, and his mysterious appearance with this small army from the hills behind, which were

thought to be nearly impassable, completed his subjection.

‘I surrender,’ he said. Then he hesitated. ‘To whom have I the honour——’

Lawrence cut him short, waving his hand to the men behind him. ‘You surrender to the forces of the Sherif of Mecca.’

He turned, mounted his camel, and waved his men on, and a race down the slopes ended in a mad helter-skelter for the sea, where they splashed with sighs of relief, their dried bodies welcoming the soothing touch of the water.

But Lawrence could not rest. All his men were hungry. They had had little to eat for two days, and the food in the port would not last long with the addition of five hundred fighting men and seven hundred prisoners. The Arabs were all for letting the latter starve, but that could not be permitted. A camel killed now and again would keep them going, but camels were badly wanted. An armed force on foot in the desert was slow, and could not get quickly away from death.

Except for the short periods of rest, Lawrence and his men had been on trek for two months. Included in this time was Lawrence’s own hard ride to Baalbek and back. He was nearly at his ebb of physical strength—but his men and the

prisoners would starve without help. Having captured Akaba, they must hold it.

They had no money, no food, and ammunition was very scarce.

One hundred and fifty miles away was Suez, but the way lay over desert land far worse than any they had yet travelled.

Once more Lawrence had to decide between sending messengers and going himself. Again he did what was to him the only obvious thing.

He picked out eight riders and camels in better condition than most, and himself picked the best camel he could find. He would need it. Hardly had he got his first wind from the run down to Akaba, than he was on his way. He had ridden something like fifty miles a day for the last month, and this last journey might try him beyond his limit.

If he sent messengers, and they got through, it was a hundred-to-one chance against their being believed. His five hundred-mile detour to take Akaba was only known as a plan to two or three people at most, and they hardly believed it could be done. The odds were all against it.

So Lawrence had to lead the trek himself.

It was a merciless, bullying drive. He had to bolster up his own failing strength by urging his small party forward. Over the whole hundred and

fifty miles there was only one supply of water, at the end of the first seventy miles. It was reached, and passed.

Nine tired men, eight of whom were born to the desert, while the ninth was an alien, prodded their beasts and themselves through the wilderness of the Sinai hills. When it seemed as if the end would never be reached, El Shatt came into sight, a little post which lay about opposite to Suez itself.

Usually held by troops, it was deserted, and Lawrence hunted through the empty camp until he found a telephone.

Suez answered the telephone, startled at hearing a ring from a camp they thought to be empty.

‘Hullo?’ There was question, surprise, and suspicion in the call.

‘Can you send a launch to bring me across to Suez?’

To say that the man at the other end of the line was astonished puts it mildly. The whole thing was all wrong. Of course he couldn’t do such a thing. Anyway, it was not his department. ‘And who the —— thought he could get a launch just as if he were ordering a taxi?’

Lawrence, tired out, was still patient.

He tried another call.

‘Sorry, old man, whoever you are, but I haven’t any boats now.’

'But I must have one at once,' argued Lawrence.

'Sorry, it can't be done, but I can send you one in the morning. Will that do?'

It would not, and Lawrence told him so, quite plainly.

In fact, after another try, he told him more than that, and the angry listener in Suez cut him off.

As he did so, a friendly voice switched in, and after a short explanation, put Lawrence through to another department.

Here his request met with immediate response, and two or three hours after, the authorities at Suez saw the landing of a slight, red-faced man, dressed in Arab clothes, with a flowing command of both English and Arabic, who with imperious words ordered this and that, and, what is more, got his own way.

He had hot baths, cold drinks, and a sleep in a bed—a luxury that was nearly a dream.

The next day he left for Cairo. He had to change at Ismailia. As he waited he saw Admiral Wemyss waiting for the Cairo train, and was just going forward to speak to him when the arrival of a bright and shining general put him off. They walked up and down and officers on either side saluted. Lawrence just stared, and so persistent was his stare that a staff officer went up to him.

He could not understand the interest of this

‘ It was like going through an extended Turkish bath ’—the Arab force emerging, under Auda’s guidance, into ‘ the staring, stabbing sunlight of the desert.’





A puff of smoke from one of Lawrence's 'tulips', and——

——the supports of a Turkish bridge are blown to atoms.



funny little man in Arab costume, but before he could satisfy his curiosity, Lawrence spoke to him.

'I would like to speak to Admiral Wemyss,' said Lawrence, softly.

The Staff Captain was too astonished to answer this gentle request, offered in pure Oxford English by a ragged-looking, insignificant Arab, so Lawrence repeated it.

The staff officer gaped, and listened again. The name 'Lawrence'. Where had he heard it? Suddenly he remembered, and in an excited manner he took Lawrence over to the Admiral. Lawrence did not waste time.

'I have just taken Akaba. My men are starving. I want a store-ship sent at once. Can you do it?'

It says much for the confidence of Admiral Wemyss and his staff officer that they did not waste time questioning such statements. They were staggered by the news, but the name of this queer Englishman was beginning to creep into the tales, true and otherwise, that went their mysterious round in Army and Navy circles.

The store-ship was loaded and sent round to Akaba immediately.

Then Lawrence, relieved at one heavy task being done, went on to Cairo. He went quietly to his chief's office, and General Clayton looked up when the door opened.

He saw the Arab standing there, and was a little surprised, to say the least, at so abrupt an approach.

‘I am engaged,’ he said, a little sharply.

‘To me?’ answered Lawrence, in English. His General shot up out of his chair in astonishment and delight, and the history of the past months was quickly told.

## CHAPTER VII

*Oh, Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make,  
And who with Eden didst devise the Snake;  
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man  
Is blacken'd, Man's Forgiveness give—and take!*

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

HEAD-QUARTERS in Egypt recovered but slowly from the shock of Lawrence's marvellous exploit, but General Allenby began to take notice of his plan, and for three months there was little done except arranging for the establishment of a base at Akaba, the collection of stores, and the training of troops.

Lawrence himself had no real master. Occasionally he would wander away for a day, or perhaps two or three, and disappear in one direction or other, coming back with items of information for which he had been seeking.

It was dangerous work, for the Turks were offering large sums in gold for news as to who was this man who was giving them so much trouble, and their spies were everywhere, trying to pin Lawrence down.

He made one daring raid on the railway at Mudawara during September 1917, more to test a new system of dynamiting than anything else.

He generally looked after this operation himself, and on this occasion he had to wait some days before a train came down the line. The mine had already been laid, and Lawrence had gone over the ground under which the connecting wires were buried, sweeping the sand carefully until it looked quite normal and undisturbed.

At last the train came puffing up. As its engine reached the point where the mine was buried, Lawrence gave the word for the explosion.

Down went the handle, and up went the engine, derailing the following carriages and spilling the Turks out wholesale.

They did not run at first. They made the embankment into a trench and gave Lawrence and his men an uncomfortable half-hour before they finally broke and fled into the desert, leaving many dead lying sprawled in the midst of the wreckage.

In October he went out to the railway with a very small party, and when he returned he coolly announced that he had got another train. It meant the death of thirty Turks, and seventy had been wounded.

He was doing everything to give the Turks the idea that the Arabs were really acting against them all up and down the railway line, and not in one place only. From now on the Turks never knew where the next blow would be struck. One day

they would hear of lines and stations being blown up in the north, and the next day similar news would come from the south. They called more troops down to man the garrisons and outposts, and spent their time wondering whose turn it would be next.

These were his usual methods. The Turks, knowing there was constant danger on the line, always sent patrols in front of each train, searching on either side of the track for suspicious signs, and circling round to see if there were any footprints.

The patrol came up for their search, and Lawrence, watching from behind a sandhill, sat still, laughing a little to himself as the Turks went nosing about, and trampled all over the ground where he had laid the wires and the mine.

The Turkish leader called his men together. Everything was all right, and he waved the train on.

Lawrence was always sending out messengers to get information, and also spread false news. He would send a report that in one place stores would be wanted for, say, five hundred men for an attack. The spy would sell the news to the Turks, the Turks would send reinforcements from the nearest post, and the next thing they knew was that the post which had sent help was the one which had been attacked and ransacked.

Carrying on this method of surprise attack, in

the latter part of October Lawrence went out for another long-distance raid. This time he had picked out a bridge which was an important link in the hills west of Deraa, standing high in the Yarmak valley. It was the great bridge or Tel el Shehab crossing the Yarmak valley on the line between Damascus and Haifa, on the coast. Once more he employed the longest way round, in order to delude the enemy, and after another very hard ride he failed with the bridge, and had to be content with blowing up a double-engined troop-train.

But during this trip he went very near to disaster, so near that it altered him completely, and turned him from a fairly even-tempered man into a bitter, hard-fighting, unforgiving leader.

Having some days to spare, he went off, with only one Arab as a companion, to spy the land near Deraa, because it was in this district that the next big operations were to take place. All the country here was in the hands of the Turks—that was the hazard of Lawrence's fighting, for it all took place behind the enemy's lines and they always lay between him and safety.

He had to get into their camps somehow or other, to find out how strong they were, and whether there were any plans for attacking the Arabs. He had to find out whether they were the sort of troops who would fight, and would, there-

fore, be hard to attack, or whether they were young and fresh to fighting, and would crack under fire.

Lawrence had no real army. He had to fight one kind of battle only—hit and run, hit and run, until the enemy was too tired to stand up. Then he could jump on him and keep him down.

Before actually going into Deraa he and his companion succeeded in 'borrowing' some clothing worn by natives of the district. They changed into it, leaving their own hidden away under a convenient rock.

Lawrence was not worrying much. His companion looked the part, while he relied on his ingenuity to explain away his own appearance.

They strolled down one of the streets, and were well into the town without attracting attention. Suddenly there was a shout:

'Halt, there!'

Lawrence felt inclined to run, but he stopped his companion, and they turned in the direction of the challenge.

Two Turkish soldiers came up to them. They fired all sorts of questions at them, and despite Lawrence's evasive cleverness at replying, he did not quite fit into the picture. He was hauled before the Turkish commandant, his comrade being released.

'Who are you?'

‘What are you?’

‘Where do you come from?’

The questions were fired at him in Arabic and Turkish, and he answered them easily. The Turkish officer eyed his slight form up and down. There was something funny to him about this man.

‘You are lying. You are a spy!’

Lawrence shook his head.

‘Make him talk!’ shouted the officer to the men.

They did their best. They beat him with sticks; they kicked him; and when he fell exhausted to the ground, his body a mass of bruises, they kicked him again.

The officer then pulled him up to his feet. This obstinacy was beyond him. He shook Lawrence—he was a burly, fat man and could shake him as a terrier does a rat—and, holding him with one arm, beat him over the head with the heel of his boot until his face was just one red, ugly mess.

Still Lawrence did not talk.

Tired even of his own brutality, the officer in the end flung the poor, bruised body from him.

The soldiers dragged Lawrence away and cast him into a room, where he lay unconscious all through the night.

In the morning, feeling terribly sick and ill, he was dragged to his feet again, and, still thinking that he held some secret locked up in his ‘stubborn

head', the Turks put him through similar beastly torture.

Lawrence looked at them and defied them in suffering silence, until he could stand the pain no longer, and he just slid to the floor unconscious.

'Take the fool away,' growled the officer, and they flung him into the room again.

In the night Lawrence regained his senses, such of them as were left, and, half crawling, staggered to a window in the room. He rested there for a little while, trying to gather some strength to climb out of the window.

At the far end of the street he could see a sentry pacing steadily up and down, but, he hoped, too far away either to see the window or hear any noises from it.

With every bone in his body aching, his head throbbing with pain, and his eyes half closed with the terrible beating the Turks had given him, Lawrence at last managed to haul his protesting body on to the window-sill. He hung from it for a moment, and then dropped into the dark shadows below. It was only a few feet, fortunately, but he lay in a heap for a while, knocked out by the pain of the fall.

It was more by luck than anything else that he got out of the town. It was a dark night, and he crawled from shadow to shadow until the houses

began to get fewer, then from tent to tent, until at last there was open country ahead.

He slept under the stars until the heat of the morning sun stirred him to action. As he lay there he turned over in his mind the wicked tortures the Turks had put him through, their inhuman treatment of so helpless a man, their brutality, and from that date he seemed to the others to be a completely changed man.

## CHAPTER VIII

*The Ball no Question makes of Ayes and Noes,  
But Right or Left as strikes the Player goes.*

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

EVERYBODY was shocked by the changed appearance of Lawrence when he returned to camp. He would not talk, and for a while walked about with a slight stoop. He had been hit by a piece of shrapnel during the attack on the bridge, but had forgotten all about it. What he was thinking about was the future, of action, anything to forget the last few days.

But the weather was changing. For two or three months sleet, snow, and rain interfered with the operations. Raids were carried out when the weather permitted, and the campaign against the railway line was continued.

In order to keep the Arabs employed, and amused, it was a favourite trick of Lawrence's to sit in the hills and watch the Turks repair a bridge which he had blown up.

When the last new plank had been put into position and the line laid, ready for the trains to run across, the Arabs would attack, drive off the guards, and spoil all their work for them with another charge of dynamite!

Generally, however, it was a case of marking time. Lawrence flew backwards and forwards between Egypt and Arabia. He made journeys by sea. He trekked here and there by camel. He was examining every possible loophole in his plans, for he meant to leave nothing to chance.

From their former disbelief in him, the Headquarters people had changed to the knowledge that without Lawrence's help with his amazing Arabian fighting they would have a long and very difficult job in driving the Turk out of Palestine.

For this reason, he was made welcome in the planning of the new advance, and in the military camps his name began to be linked up with many queer stories, some true, others mostly 'tales'. Curiously enough, very few people outside the Headquarters officers and the people down in Arabia had seen Lawrence. He was just a name!

Those who fought and worked with him had forgotten their first astonishment at seeing him. They just did as he asked, knowing that he did not order action in a certain direction unless he knew the chances were that it would go through just as he planned. Both Arabs and the few British soldiers who helped came to believe in everything he said and did.

If Lawrence said it could be done, that was

good enough. If he said it couldn't be done, they forgot all about it.

That was their attitude, and with it they combined a real love for the wonderful little man with the great heart.

Lawrence spent some little time reading. Whenever he had any spare time he would sit in Captain Marshall's tent (he was the camp's medical officer), lost in the pages of the *Mort d'Arthur*.

He kept an impatient eye on the weather, and at the beginning of 1918, when it improved a little, he stirred himself for action again.

He had had his eye on Tafleh, which lay at the southern end of the Dead Sea, and which, while in the hands of the Turks, would always be dangerous to his plans.

He went up to Guweira to get his force together for an attack, and in three weeks he moved gradually northward. Then, a little below Tafleh, he split his force for attacks on the east, south, and west sides of the position. By the 20th they were nearly ready. Jurf, the nearest station, had been captured and destroyed; but with everything set for the attack on Tafleh, the weather turned against them.

It snowed heavily for three days, and once more Lawrence complained bitterly against the British authorities. The text-books gave Arabia as a hot

country—all sand and hot sun. Snow? Why the Arabians must be mad. Whoever heard of snow in Arabia? That was the attitude of Headquarters, and such stupidity caused a lot of unnecessary suffering, even death.

Lawrence had asked for extra clothing, blankets, and tents as a protection against cold weather, but in their ignorance the authorities did not trouble.

When the cold snap came, Lawrence and his men were penned in on the plateau above Ma'an, nearly five thousand feet above sea-level. It was a winter as bad as any one had known in living memory, and men died quickly. The camels struggled on, fell, and were left on the road-side.

Cold, stiffened fingers tried to handle rifles, but the men's only desire was to huddle up in odd corners until the sun returned. It was all Lawrence could do to drive his ragged army forward.

The Turks heard of their persistent advance, and post after post was abandoned to these Arabs who, despite being children of the sun, pushed their way through snow-drifts and over ice-covered roads, fighting with a doggedness which astounded their enemy.

They knew the Arab's dislike of sustained campaigning, and wondered uneasily what sort of leader they could have who could hold them together and turn them into such strong and terrible

fighters. Wherever the blue-eyed Arab turned up, the Turks knew they were in for trouble.

Suddenly the Turks hit back. Lawrence had just got his men posted on the high ridges overlooking Tafleeh, when a horde of his Arabs came fleeing down the valleys, pursued by Turkish cavalry!

It was still dark, and the terror of the pursuit, added to the flash of enemy rifles, nearly created a panic among the Arabs. Lawrence countered this by sending two men forward with Hotchkiss guns, to create a diversion while he reviewed the situation.

The sound of the firing increased, and it became evident that the main body of the enemy were coming steadily on to the position he now held.

Ordering his gunners to stand fast, Lawrence scrambled down one ridge and up another, and from the top studied the attacking Turks. Knowing that he had only about eighty men to hold the ridge, he sent messengers back to those who had been fighting in the villages behind, asking them to come up with all possible speed.

He then started a very slow retreating action. If by the time his own guns and machine-guns had got up he could persuade the Turks to rush and occupy this ridge, it would be possible to get them in a trap.

Lawrence watched the bursting shells get nearer and nearer as long as he dared, but when one burst of shrapnel scattered over his own little spot and sprayed the ground with vicious little death-dealing slivers of lead, he decided it was time to move!

The next thing was to arrange where to place his own reinforcements, *if* and *when* they arrived. He started to run down the bank and across the flat to where he had posted a small reserve.

As he ran, the shells were bursting, and bullets were dropping directly round him, or screaming by as ricochets struck the rocks behind and at the side.

But Lawrence was busy!

'One, two, three, four . . . '—he counted as he ran, untroubled about the death flying round him. He wanted to know the range between ridge and ridge, and was counting the yards!

Then it began to get too hot, and as an Arab horseman came up he caught hold of a stirrup-iron and was hurried into safety, behind his main position, just as the Turks mounted the abandoned ridge, and began to pepper the Arabs with a general fire.

As Lawrence rolled into shelter he saw to his delight that the rest of his force were coming up fast—including machine-guns, automatic rifles,

and the one mountain gun which had helped them so much in their little fights against the railway forts.

'Hold them now for a while,' he ordered.

Then he rolled up into a little hollow, and went to sleep for an hour!

When he awoke, his small army was ready. He looked at the enemy. They had very carefully taken up their position on the ridge he had left a few hours before, which he knew was exposed to his fire. His little trap had worked!

Better still, he knew the range to a nicety, and when his shells began dropping among the enemy, on that flinty, rocky ledge, the ricochets would do nearly as much damage as the bullets themselves.

He sent one force of cavalry round to the left. Others he sent to the right. While these movements were going on, he ordered a constant up-and-down movement in the centre, which kept the enemy's eyes on the main body, and gave an illusion of a far larger force than Lawrence's mere hundreds.

Most of the Arabs who made up the force knew this country, rock for rock, and crept up right under the noses of the enemy. Then Lawrence began his attack.

He bombarded them from the centre. While the

Turks prepared to face this, there was a flank attack from the left. Seeing no movement from the centre, they turned to deal with this. Immediately, the flanking force from the right fell on them, and half the Turks turned about, confused. As soon as right and left were engaged Lawrence charged at the head of his men from the centre. It was a rout; but a more terrible enemy was waiting behind Lawrence's forces.

The Armenians from the villages round about, who had suffered horribly for years from the treatment of the Turks, were crouching there, hoping for victory for the Arabs.

As soon as they saw the Turks break and run for the hills, they jumped up from behind their cover, and, howling curses and threats, drew their knives and went for them.

The Turks did not know the country. They were running into narrow little paths between great steep cliffs, up which they could not climb, and the Armenians, familiar with every foot, sought them out and killed them one by one, not quickly but slowly.

Death did not come easily to the terror-stricken Turks, for the Armenians were paying back with each cut of the knife the tally of suffering which had been their lot for years and years.

It was a terrible end for the enemy, and a really

costly business for Lawrence, for he had lost about 120 men killed and wounded.

He could ill afford such a loss, but it was done and over, and as the shouting died away the snow came again, softly, persistently, and gently covered up the dead and dying with its pure mantle of white.

This further fall of snow held Lawrence up for another month, but he had his *Mort d'Arthur* with him, and it helped him to while away many tedious hours.

He got tired of this, however, in the end. The men also were getting out of hand through having nothing to do. Lawrence decided, therefore, to go down to Aba el Lissan, after disbanding the majority of the present camp. He would have to have some arrangements in hand when the spring came, but no plans would be possible without more gold.

It was a long, cold ride, but he had a welcome when he reached the forward base, for Colonel Joyce was there, with fifty thousand pounds in gold. Lawrence was pleased, though, with the fact that they had sent his favourite camel up from Akaba. That brought quite a smile to his face, a smile which was rarely there these days.

He did not delay, but loaded up his own and twenty other camels with the gold, and started back again for Tafleh.

His rides were always dangerous: this was one he never forgot. All the ground was slippery with snow and frozen mud. Camels and men had to struggle against the coldest of winds coming down from the north. Where the camels could not walk, they slid, and not always forward. They were doing no more than a mile an hour, and before the night arrived every man was a mass of bruises.

Once Lawrence got bogged, and only escaped by hanging on to the hind leg of his camel while she pulled him out. What with this and other adventures, the rest of the party refused to go on, and Lawrence had to find a friendly shelter for the night. This done he left Shobek—where he had halted—and carried on, alone.

By this time Lawrence's camel, much as she liked her master, had developed an understandable hatred of the snow. She had never seen it before, and disliked its soft, damp feel, which was so different from her warm, sandy country. When at last she fell in a deep drift, she refused to move!

If Lawrence couldn't get her on the way, both he and the camel would freeze to death, a lonely and hopeless end to such a brave beginning. He dug a way out, cutting his hands and feet in doing it, and with this start the camel managed to get up and over the bank.

Then there was another stop. The camel had just about reached its limit.

It is odd, but very true, that when camels refuse to travel farther because they are tired, they will stand in the spot where they stop, and so stay until they drop and die, not making any effort to move. If his camel did this, Lawrence would have to fight his way through on foot, with the odds more than ever against him.

Here he was, right on top of the ridge, and thousands of feet below was green, pleasant country, and safety! The situation was desperate. One little village, Rasheidiya, lay about a mile down the slope.

A little angry, and determined to make one last effort to get away from the snow and the drifts and the slippery ridges, Lawrence remounted. He hit his camel hard on the neck, and at the same time kicked her in the side with all his force!

She shot up the little rise, burst over the top, and before either beast or rider knew what was happening, they were tobogganing down the slopes! After a few grunts of protest, the camel apparently decided that this was, after all, an easier method of traveling, compared with what had gone before, so she continued.

Downhill they plunged, Lawrence shouting and yelling to keep her at it, the camel trumpeting with

rage and pain. Sometimes they were on their feet, at other times just sliding, sliding, until at last, with a shake and one last snort of disgust, the beast reached something she knew. It was a road, and there were houses. That was better!

The villagers came out, astonished at so undignified an entry, but they made Lawrence welcome. The next day he had finished his journey, but he had no chance to rest.

General Allenby wanted to see him, and he hurried off once more down to Akaba. From there he flew to Egypt and Palestine.

When he did meet the General, it was to find him seriously troubled. The Allies could not move in the west. All the time Turkey remained on the side of Germany the chances of an Allied victory grew more difficult.

General Allenby explained this to Lawrence. It was a strange scene. On one side was the General Officer Commanding the whole of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, responsible for the campaign against the Turks. The Chiefs on the Western Front had asked for his assistance. He in turn could see no other way but to ask this harum-scarum amateur soldier what he could do.

Here was Lawrence's chance, and he jumped at it.

He told the General what he wanted—more

guns, more machine-guns, more camels. Money, of course, and plenty of food.

If General Allenby could keep the enemy from worrying on the western side, keep him off while Lawrence dealt with him on the other side, he would carry out his old plan, the plan he had thought out months ago, the plan the other generals had laughed at.

The discussion was brief and pointed, but in the end Lawrence had his way. He won General Allenby completely over to his cause, and the first step was decided on—the capture of Ma'an.

What it meant in plain words was, if the British soldiers did their bit on their side of the line, Lawrence would see that his irregulars kept their end up.

Full of his new-won aid, Lawrence flew back to Akaba, and spread the good news among the Arabs. 'General Allenby wants our help,' he said, 'and we must see that he gets it.'



## CHAPTER IX

*Alike for those who for To-day prepare,  
And those that after a To-morrow stare.*

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

AKABA now had lost its centuries-old sleepiness. The sandy slopes running up from the shore to the Wadi Araba were dotted here and there, not with the black tents of wandering Arabs, but with more or less tidy little camps. There was an aerodrome to the west of the main camp, and some sort of landing-pier had been made to help in taking stores off from the boats which were constantly in and out of harbour.

There were about one hundred English soldiers in the port, sent there to look after the stores and to keep the armoured cars and ten-pounder batteries going. There were others to keep the camels fit, and the men from the Ordnance Department, who had had such a novel and exciting time at the beginning of the revolt, had come up to Akaba.

Their task now was a little easier, for they had to keep more or less modern rifles in repair, but sometimes an ancient muzzle-loader would come to their hands. Remembering past bursts, they would handle it carefully.

Sometimes, feeling a gun was beyond repair,

they would hand the Arab a brand new rifle in exchange, but he would refuse it as if it had been a gift from the devil. He wanted his own gun! The armourers, marvelling at such stupidity, would tap another piece of tin binding round the stock or the barrel, and hand it back to the now happy Arab.

Guweira, between the Negb el Shtar and Akaba, had been turned into a forward camp. It was a great plain, surrounded by high cliffs of sandstone, full of colouring like the cliffs of Devon. The mud flats were good stretches for landing-grounds—except when it rained, when a machine would sink in over the wheels—and now that armoured cars and their tenders had been lent to Lawrence to help in his work, some speed was added to the operations.

However, the road was not an easy one. From Akaba to the Wadi Ithm it was all bumps over ground covered with small boulders. In the valley itself the cars often had to scrape through narrow little openings, and care had to be taken to see that the wheels did not catch the edges of rocks, as these were as sharp as razors.

Lawrence's first journey from Akaba by car was an adventure in itself. Having got safely through the valley, and gone at breakneck speed over the racing surface of the flats, he drove on until the north end of the Guweira plain was reached.

As he looked up to the top of the Negb, with its

winding, cork-screw pass—a very bad road for camels—he turned to the crew of the armoured car and pointed upwards. The men—who had braved the little war in the Siwa oasis, in the north of Africa—had not seen anything quite like this before.

‘That’s where we have to get,’ said Lawrence, pointing up what looked like a sheer rise of cliffs.

They started, and after what seemed ages, a tired, panting crew got the car to the top. It was mostly push and pull work, with the engine straining at its limit. Now and again a wheel would slide, skid, and hang with a sickening spin on the edge of the path. It would then be ‘all together, boys’, a moment’s breathless holding, and slowly but surely the machine was edged back on to the path.

It was always a hard passage, whether going up or down. The pass had to be used each time they wanted to get from Akaba to Aba el Lissan and the country which ran down to the line at Ma’an. There was no other way of getting there without running hundreds of miles round.

The Negb el Shtar became very well known to Lawrence and his men, but they always found time to stop at the top and take in one of the world’s most wonderful views.

About twenty miles away, a dot in the distance, the Guweira camp lay below, at the other end of

the plain, encircled by mountains. To the right there were the rugged, barren hills of Sinai, and dotted about, helter-skelter on the plain, were the rocks which wind and water had worn into all sorts of curious shapes. From this height it looked rather like a bit of crazy paving, with huge totem-like statues guarding the passages.

The first journeys of the armoured cars and their tenders over the strange country going out from Aba el Lissan were real adventures. The drivers never knew what was coming next.

There would be breakneck rushes at fifty to sixty miles an hour over fairly flat and hard roads, and then a soft whizz, a skidding of wheels, and the car would be axle deep in sand. Out everybody would get, unload the car, stagger with the goods to the next piece of firm ground, which might be a few yards away or a mile, and then push or pull the car out of the sand. (Later these soft stretches were covered with wire mesh, rather like that which is used for building hen-coops, and this gave the necessary grip to the wheels.)

For a time Akaba was the centre of everything. The armoured cars went in and out, the aeroplanes hummed their way overhead, camel caravans wound endlessly in and out the narrow valleys, and Lawrence and other British officers and men tried their hardest to make soldiers out of the

men who were volunteering to fight for the Arab revolution.

The men in the British camp were never quiet. The trouble was that the Arab could never resist firing at shining objects. Even as the cook moved about his work, there would be a *ph-ee-ee-w* of a bullet and a clang, and another bull's-eye would go to the credit of some unseen marksman! The cook did *not* call it a bull's-eye!

Arabs do not like strange objects. If they are near, they crowd round to find out what they are. If there is something in the distance which looks like a good rifle mark to them, up go their guns, shots ring out, and to some extent their curiosity is satisfied.

Men who walked about with the Arab head-dress on could do so without danger, but there were one or two unfortunate ones who, through force of habit, went out of their camp or round it wearing the ordinary helmet.

The Arabs knew the head-dress, but they did not know the helmet. Therefore, it was a legitimate mark for a shot. One man lost his life through this sort of thing, but men did not wear helmets twice. To have them knocked off their heads by flying bullets was a good enough hint!

Such was the life in and out of which Lawrence and his men would come and go. He had now

gathered around him about forty of the most desperate fighters in all Arabia. As the Spanish Main had its pirates, so the desert provided a blood-thirsty lot of scoundrels who would fight anybody and anything so long as Lawrence led them. Each tried to wear brighter colours than the other, and to have brighter trappings for his camel, and when they rode out on their forays they were a riot of colour, contrasting with the white form of Lawrence in the centre.

Two rifles were carried by each man, generally two revolvers, a bandolier full of ammunition slung over each shoulder, and in the belt a dagger. Sometimes the armoury ran in pairs—two rifles, two revolvers, and two daggers!

The camels—like those Lawrence rode—were the fastest and strongest that could be found.

It was with these men that Lawrence performed some of his bravest feats, especially during this waiting period.

The battles on the British side had not gone according to plan, and General Allenby was forced to hold on for two or three months. The fighting in Europe was getting more intense. They were even calling for reinforcements to be sent from Egypt. This weakened General Allenby still further, and more and more he had to rely not so much on strength as on artfulness.

In this latter stage of warfare he found a past-master in Lawrence. His constant moves up and down the railway, his simultaneous attacks hundreds of miles apart, a sally by armoured cars here, one by infantry there, another by camels in yet a third direction, and, to crown it all, constant bombing by the two or three aeroplanes at Lawrence's disposal—all these things kept the Turks guessing. They thought Lawrence had thousands of men up and down the railway line. He really had a few hundreds!

They thought there were more men coming into Palestine and Arabia to attack them, whereas, if they had only known the truth, there were fewer.

It was a big game of bluff, with Lawrence the leading figure, keeping the Turks in suspense while General Allenby rearranged his forces and prepared for one grand sweep, which must succeed in a single blow—or the whole campaign would collapse, and, with it, the British Empire and its Allies!

On so small a thing—the Arab revolution—did the strength of the Allies rest at that moment. If the pressure on the west could be relieved by the defeat of Turkey, the forces there could be sent over to France and then the Allies in France could move forward.

Lawrence planned feverishly. One day he would be in Akaba, the next north on the railway, the next in Palestine. He was here, there, and everywhere. He guided this and that force, left an idea with it, and trusted it to carry it out. It was all part of the main scheme.

He had said down in Jeddah, those many months before, that Damascus was his goal. He meant it then, and he knew that it was the key to the whole war in the East. Damascus had to fall, and the Allies, through General Allenby, relied on him to make up the storming party.

Everything was subordinated to the main operations, and at last the details were arranged.

The attack was to take place in September. General Allenby's main army was to gather in secret near Ramleh, to remain hidden in the orange and olive groves until the word was given. While the Turks kept their eyes on the Hejaz railway, wondering where next the Arabs would strike, a great camp would be built near Jericho, consisting of thousands of old tents. Disused and captured guns would be gathered and lined up against the enemy.

The Air Force were to keep up a constant movement over the district with the idea of stopping flights by enemy aircraft, and on the day when the attack was timed what guns could fire would

‘The rubbish and stones  
blown down into the wells  
by the charge of dynamite  
were cleared away.’





A halt at an oasis—a picture that rather suggests the game of 'skeletons,' in which one writes one's name, then folds the paper while the ink is still wet.





‘The way to Akaba was open !

start a bombardment, and up and down the roads and the open spaces horsemen would drag trees and branches and logs to create the great storms of dust that were usually raised when armies were marching.

This was planning after Lawrence's heart. Here was the age-old idea of luring an enemy to destruction, but he knew better than any one else that he had the harder part to do.

Even while he was agreeing that he would work his plans in, right to the hour, with whatever the British Army was doing, he was thinking of another British officer, a certain Major, and his adventures a few weeks before.

The old dodge of breaking off a battle to have a cup of coffee had been extended, and while the Major told his story to a roar of laughter, there was the tragedy in it that these were the troops with which Lawrence was promising timed movements.

He said they would work to a time-table, when he knew in his heart that to the Arab even weeks did not matter. The future was in the hands of Allah, not in that of poor man!

Lawrence had given his new assistant the job of attacking a section of railway line about eighty miles long, and some parts of the Sherifian army were put under his command for the fighting.

Right at the start they found they were without a guide, and the camp where they were all to gather was only found by luck.

The Major left them there and rode forward to spy out the country. He waited for about three days, expecting them to follow, but as they did not turn up, he went back, to find that they had been sitting and resting amongst the trees, waiting for tents to be brought from the south to make them comfortable.

As this force had the guns which were really wanted for the fighting against the line, this was annoying, but at last he got them on the move. He saw the guns move off, in charge of about fifty regular Sherifian soldiers, and when they did arrive at the point for attack, the Major suggested moving them into position.

‘What! By ourselves, and without the Bedouin?’ The Arab officer was obviously astounded that he should suggest such a thing.

Thinking that Faisal’s chief officer would be annoyed at this further delay, the Major dashed back to get the Bedouin on the move. But this just suited Nuri.

‘Good,’ he said. ‘If you cannot move I can borrow your camels while I do a bit of fighting. I have some men here but no camels!’

The Major could only agree, on the condition

that the camels were returned to him the next day, so that his company could move.

‘His company?’ he said. ‘Oh, that will not matter. I am borrowing the company as well.’

Actually, the company and the camels had already gone, and if the Major wanted to fight he would have to fight by himself.

Annoyed, he went back to his guns, only to find that they, too, had gone, under some one else’s orders. Having discovered who had got them, he started off, and at last found them a good way away, down the line. But he was no better off.

‘When would the guns start?’ he asked.

‘The guns must have an escort of a hundred soldiers.’

‘Well? You have a hundred soldiers here.’

‘Yes, but we have no camels.’

‘I know that, but the Emir Faisal is sending them.’

‘That also *I* know,’ replied the Arab officer, ‘but I also know that they have no saddles!’

Back went the Major to Faisal, to find another hitch. ‘Last month,’ he was told, ‘had twenty-nine days in it, and to-day is the first. The Bedouin who are to help are convinced that there were thirty days in last month, and, therefore, that the first is not until to-morrow. They will not be ready to start until to-morrow!’

This was getting beyond the Major’s patience,

but he could do nothing. He had wasted fourteen days wandering from this to that point, looking for the guns that did not arrive, and for the men without camels, and for the camels without saddles. He wondered if he would ever get the whole of his supposed army together.

However, he did get all his different parts together, camels, saddles, men, and guns, and the attack was arranged. The company were to start at dawn.

The Major got up early. No one was moving. He waited until seven, and then sent a messenger to ask what was the matter.

The reply came back at nine o'clock:

'Your honour, we have not yet been paid. Until we receive our gold we will not march.'

Having satisfied them with promises, there was another delay: they hadn't enough saddles.

This being settled, the Major waited for the final move. Another messenger came up, and saluted.

'Your Honour!'

'Well?' answered the Major, wondering what was coming this time.

'The victorious British are advancing.'

'What about it?'

'The men cannot meet the British Army in ragged trousers!'

Nothing would move them, and not until the Major had begged, borrowed, or stolen sufficient new pairs of trousers to fit the men out would they march.

They marched!

There is only one thing more to be added to this story.

The attack failed!



## CHAPTER X

*The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts upon  
Turns Ashes—or it prospers;*

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

THE Major's adventures are a good illustration of the type of Arab Lawrence had to use in his attempt to drive the Turks from Arabia, but he did not retreat from the attitude he took up when discussing plans at Head-quarters. He said his plan could be carried out. Having given his word, he spent four or five days between the forward base, Aba el Lissan, and Akaba, discussing transport, &c.

He then flew from Guweira to Jefer, where Faisal was staying, to confirm promises made and received. His next move was to meet a party of the Imperial Camel Corps, who had taken the desert route from Palestine to Arabia.

Ever since the I.C.C. had heard they were being sent for a special 'job' in Arabia, both officers and men had been quite excited to think that at last they were to meet the man who had been terrorizing all the Turks, and for the capture of whom the Turks had offered a reward of £10,000, alive or dead.

A little way out from Akaba the message came through that Lawrence was coming out to them, and the company halted.

To all of them he was merely a name, but after the tales they had heard they expected something heroic, an outstanding figure, or what is now termed 'a man's man'.

As they waited, a small figure wandered into view, walking gently down the lines of the men, eyes on the ground, hands folded in front of him. The officer commanding rode up and saluted.

At this all the men stared, and stared again. There were whispers, and more stares.

'Men, this is Colonel Lawrence. He has a few words of advice to give you.'

For a few seconds Lawrence talked to the men in his low voice, which just carried to the outer ranks. He told them they were to fight with men who were a little different from their own comrades. They were impatient, easy to scare, easy to flare up at insults—whether imagined, real, or unintended. They did not understand the ordered method of fighting, and would probably rush where the Camel Corps stood firm, or hang behind just as their support was required. But they were the allies of the British, and he wanted them to make all allowances for them. That was all.

After a few more words with the officer in charge, he moved off, just as quietly as he had come.

The men were frankly disappointed. This surely

was no fire-eater? There was a fierce discussion as they camped for the night. It was, for most of them, their only meeting with the now legendary 'fighting terror', and he remained for them, as for most other soldiers in the British Army, a complete mystery.

Lawrence saw the Camel Corps once more, when they went into action towards the end of the month, and then he called all his helpers up for a conference at Aba el Lissan.

Their gathering together was marked by a very serious revolt in the ranks of the Sherifian army. It was another illustration of the queer jealousies of these child-like Arabs.

King Hussein attacked General Ja'afer Pasha, a clever Syrian who, since his capture while serving with the Turks, had volunteered his services for the Sherifian army and had done much to make it an efficient force.

Ja'afer and his fellow officers offered their resignation. Prince Faisal, annoyed with his father for making such an ill-timed attack, refused to let them go. He and his brothers sent wires and letters to their father down in Mecca, telling him what they thought of him. They were so strongly worded that Lawrence had to tone them down. Even then, he got such replies from the old King that he had to alter the messages.

It was comedy in one way, and yet tragedy in another, for the forces were just ready to move to get into position for the final offensive—the offensive which Lawrence had promised should go like clockwork.

It took every bit of Lawrence's clever tongue and mind to smooth the quarrel down, and in the end the convoys and troops moved off only thirty-six hours late. They were valuable hours, and they had to be made up.

The beginning had its hazards. It was fairly easy, but slow going, until the fearsome Negb el Shtar was reached.

This provided what seemed endless hours of strain. If it had been a matter of camels and mules on a lead and the passage of foot-men, it was no more than a rough scramble up the zigzag to the top. But all the men on foot had various little matters to attend to, which involved pushing and pulling up the Negb, in turn, explosives, ten-pounder guns, quick-firer guns, and occasional obstinate camels which straddled in the middle of the path and refused to move either one way or the other.

All the cars were well loaded, and practically all the way up the hill the men sweated and groaned as they put hands to the spokes, and shoulders to the backs, to add man-power to the overstrained horse-power of the engines.

The food problem had to receive careful attention, for the different rations had to be kept separate. Each and every detachment had its peculiar varieties of food—there were bales and boxes for the British, French, Arab, Egyptian, and Gurkha units, all very different items, and all treasured by the men of each nation.

Major Young, who had been given the very difficult job of arranging the forward transport, had to be friend and father and mother to this mixed family, and at the same time see that sufficient petrol was on the way for cars and aeroplanes.

All this was very necessary. It was the life-blood of the little raiding army. Jefer, the first stop from Aba el Lissan, was sixty miles away. The same distance separated Jefer from Bair. From the last-named to Azrak—the camp from which the main advance was to be launched—it was a hundred and twenty miles.

Jefer, Bair, and Azrak are called oases on the map, but they were just water-holes in a very barren land. There was no food for man and no grazing for beasts. Any force that wished to live there, if only for a few days, would have to carry all its own food.

For this reason every care had to be taken with these preliminary arrangements, and it is a tribute

to Major Young's patience that he accomplished with untrained and undisciplined camel men the difficult feat of getting his convoys at the arranged points with something like the precision of regular army transport. They had to be there on a given day at a given point. Failure meant death and disaster in the end!

Hours were lost here and there, and they had to be made up. Major Young had no magic at his command, like moving the moon from the sky, but he had a wonderful tongue, well used to dealing slowly, but faithfully, with the beginning, present, and possible horrible future of all those poor unfortunates who did not see that the wishes of the mighty Lawrence were carried out.

There was no glory in this part of the fighting, only the humdrum job of supplies. Yet if the present Governor of Northern Nigeria were asked what he considered to be the best thing in his long and eventful career it is probable that he would pick out this one great feat—the organization of supplies for Lawrence's last rush to Damascus.

Having seen the fighting force on its way up the valley, Lawrence himself got ready to move. He had abandoned his camel, for speed was the essential in this last fight, the fight in which he meant to prove that he and the Arabs could keep their word. He took his seat in the armoured car

which was to be his steed for many days, and gave the signal for the start.

Nearly two years before he had told Prince Faisal that Damascus was the goal.

All the little side-shows were over. The fantastic five-hundred-mile rides, the spectacular blowing up of the rail-road, the constant living between the enemy lines in the fear that one day he would be betrayed and all his grand schemes brought to nothing—all this was over.

He had told General Allenby that when he was ready to move on the other side of the Jordan, the Arabs would be ready to drive the Turks out of northern Arabia, out of Syria, out of the war!

He was very sure of his moves. Ancient Azrak was the rallying-point, and he arranged for sufficient supplies to carry the men forward to the end. He made no arrangements whatever for the possibility of a return. He was going to win Damascus, and as victors the Arabs would at last occupy their own country. Why, then, think of returning?

It was a compact but very mixed army that he led to Azrak. There were 450 of the Camel Corps of the Sherifian army, picked men, well trained, seasoned fighters. Included among them were Vickers and Hotchkiss gunners. A small detachment of Frenchmen made up a battery of quick-firer guns. Then there were the British armoured

cars and their tenders, a section of Indian Camel Corps, a company of Egyptian Camel Corps—and *two* aeroplanes.

There were just under a thousand men, and they were marching against a desperate force of Turks ten times their number. The Turks knew now that the war between themselves and the Arabs would have to be fought to the bitter end. It was a fight without mercy, a fight to the death, in which the loser would be better dead than alive!

Azrak was reached without incident.

Lawrence kept on the move, wandering in and out of the various camps, quietly confident in everything. He had convinced every one of the necessity for obeying orders at once. Failure meant loss of honour to the Arabs, on whose behalf he had given his word. It also meant that the Turks would get them in a trap from which there could be no escape except through death's door.

This was the Arabs' last fight for freedom, and *they must win*, no matter what odds were against them.

*They must win!*

On September 10 the two aeroplanes flew up to the small landing-ground, and circled down to the delighted cheers of the Arabs. Murphy and Junior were the pilots, and they told Lawrence that Prince Faisal would probably arrive to-morrow.

The next day Colonel Joyce arrived, with Major Stirling, and as soon as they reached camp Lawrence called a conference of the British officers. He now told them all his plans, and gave them his final warning.

'We *dare* not fail,' he said, in conclusion.

Not until then had the company fully realized how much depended on their success.

The next day Lawrence received some very queer visitors. He spoke to them secretly, talking of great gatherings here, buying grain there, storing dynamite somewhere else. He paid them gold, and they slunk out of camp with Lawrence's 'instructions'.

Lawrence had picked his men carefully. He knew that every one of them would make his way to the Turks by the shortest route, and sell his supposed plans. That would keep the Turks busy—but in the wrong direction!

He did not want any large force to be interested in his movements, not at the moment, anyway.

The next day they had moved still farther north, in country which was neither for the Turks nor for the Arabs. As they moved through the hills of the Druse country there was a shout from one of the forward scouts, and those who heard him looked in the direction in which he was pointing.

It was an aeroplane—and it was a German!

It was also very curious. It came nearer, evidently bent on finding out what this force was that looked so warlike and so unlike the usual crowd of wandering Arabs.

Lawrence did not wait. 'Take cover,' he shouted, 'and spread out!'

He had to reduce the numbers that could be seen, but, fortunately for him, and for the future of the force, one of our two aeroplanes was also 'up', and he spotted the unwelcome intruder.

The German was a two-seater machine of a later type than the old B.E. 12 which Murphy was flying, but the latter was too quick for him. He rode high above him and then came down in a terrific dive on his tail.

The German must have seen him, for he slipped the dive and fired a burst into Murphy's machine as it went roaring by. The little fighter staggered, and Lawrence and his men gasped. Was this the end?

Hardly had the fear gone in and out of their minds when the British machine shot up from its dive and caught the German on his next turn. There was a rat-tat-tat, a puff of smoke, and a burst of flame from the German!

The little crowd below cheered and—what was a little more dangerous—fired volleys into the air as the enemy machine twisted downwards swiftly

to the hills, and crashed in a flaming wreck about a mile away.

Murphy, however, had had his machine badly knocked about in that first dive, and he was put out of action. He managed to land safely, but that was all.

Lawrence's Air Force now numbered one!



## CHAPTER XI

*What, without asking, hither hurried whence?  
And, without asking, whither hurried hence!*

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

THIS threat to the plan having disappeared, Lawrence's next thought was Deraa and the north, and he sent the Egyptians and Gurkhas, escorted by two armoured cars, to break the line between that point and Amman, with the idea of preventing the Turks from sending help from the south.

Fate gave this move a curious little twist. These uniformed men, absolute 'foreigners' to the country, arrived at the line all right, to be held up by a party of local Arabs, who were being paid by the Turks to protect the section. If the raiding party had consisted of their own countrymen the sight of a little more gold than they were receiving from the Turks would have turned the defenders into attackers.

As it was, they could not understand whence these strange fighters had come, and they turned them back.

Their report to the impatient Lawrence, now all on edge to keep to his time-table, caused him to make another of his amazing decisions. No camel-

men could again go down to the line and catch up with the main force. There was not the time.

‘Load up the tender,’ he said. ‘The line must be cut, so I’ll take the cars down to the line myself and catch you up later.’

It was a mad ride. Lawrence’s mark was a bridge and a station about ten miles back. The tender was loaded with gun-cotton and exploders, and Lawrence drove off, with Colonel Joyce sitting beside him. On either side of the tender roared the armoured cars. It was a risk, for a shot into the tender would blow them all sky-high!

However, before the Turks knew what had happened, much less raise an alarm, the cars rushed on them and the party at once surrendered.

Lawrence went over to the bridge. He read the very flattering inscription on it to Abd el Hamid, and said ‘it all looks very pleasant.’

One hundred and fifty pounds of gun-cotton made a mess of the inscription and the bridge, and with a little more the station and some part of the line were put out of action.

While this was going on, a comforting procession went up over the heads of the force. The bombers from the British side were on their way to Deraa, and as they droned on the crawling army below raised a hoarse cheer. This was something like a war!

In front, to left and right, rode the army's scouts, occasionally showing against the sky-line. The force was now stretched along a high ridge, with Deraa down amongst the hills, miles away. They could see flashes and thick, smoky bursts over the town. The bombers were there!

On the 17th, when they were near Tell Arar, Lawrence concentrated on the railway line. He planted some of his 'tulips'. The reasons for this fanciful description were found in his own instructions, which set out quite clearly how this new kind of 'flower' could be cultivated.

'This', he wrote, 'is the cheapest and most effective destructive demolition for a line with steel sleepers. Dig a hole mid-way between the track under a mid-rail sleeper, and work out the ballast from the hollow section. Put in two slabs of gun-cotton, return the ballast to the hole, and light!

'If the charge is properly laid and is not actually in contact with the sleeper, a 12-inch fuse is enough. The gas-expansion arches the sleeper eighteen inches above the horizontal, and twists the web from the bottom inwards. It drives a trough (trench) a foot deep across the foundation. This three-dimensional distortion is impossible to straighten, and the rails have to be cut or scrapped.

'A gang of four men can lay twenty "tulips" in an hour, and for each two slabs (and single fuse) you ruin a sleeper, a yard of bank and two rails.

'The effect of a long stretch of line planted with these tulips is most beautiful, since no two look alike!'

This work done, he climbed to have another

look at Deraa. The force was a little nearer now, but his first view of the town was enough. He waved his men down from the ridge. It was too late!

He was looking down on the enemy aerodrome, which was a hive of activity. Nine enemy planes were just on the move, too late to chase the bombers, who had started back long ago, but quite in time to search the hills for signs of armed forces, and they had seen the movements of some of Lawrence's patrols along the sky-line.

There was a scattering away from open ground to the shelter of the rocks. The camels were barracked as much out of sight as possible, and everything was done to reduce the enemy's mark.

With a roar and a clatter they were over the ridge and into the valley. They dropped their bombs at each suspicion of a movement, and went swooping up and down as they raked the hills with machine-guns. For an hour they swarmed round Lawrence's men like bees, and the situation was fast developing into something like a panic when his air force of one dropped in the middle of the attackers.

It was Junor's B.E. 12, an out-of-date and slow machine, valuable as a demonstration to the Arabs that Lawrence had got a 'devil-bird', but not much good against the faster and better-equipped enemy planes.

Lawrence and his men watched anxiously. Junor sailed round, as if to say 'how-d'ye-do', and turned to run. To everybody's relief the whole circus of the enemy turned and swooped after him!

As they went, Lawrence and his officers restored order as best they could and got the little army moving out of its dangerous position.

Just as the whole area had been cleared, Lawrence wondering all the while what had happened to the plucky Junor, back he came, with three of the enemy more or less on his tail.

For a few minutes he gave a most amazing exhibition, for he put his screaming and protesting slow-coach of a bus through a series of loops and rolls and stalls that managed to avoid, by some miraculous means, the combined attention of his three furious and vicious attackers.

He flattened out of one turn and dropped a message in the valley. How he had managed to scribble it and manœuvre his machine at the same time could never be explained.

'I'm out of petrol—coming down!'

Down he came, and just as he finished his run in he hit a boulder and turned completely over on his back. Even as men rushed to the wreck to pull him out the enemy roared down-wind one after the other and raked the area with bullets.

Junor was seen to scramble out and run round

the side of his machine. He tugged and pulled at his Lewis gun, freed it, and staggered to the Ford tender which had come fussing up to help.

He was out of breath, streaked with petrol and sweat, and boiling over with excitement and rage. He nearly stuttered as he shouted, 'I'll have my gun on this'—patting the Ford—'They haven't finished with me yet!'

They certainly had not seen the last of him, for he spent the rest of his time chasing Turks and peppering them from the back of the little Ford tender!

Lawrence did not wait. The enemy might return, and there was no knowing what the Deraa force would do.

But Deraa was silent, and when the town was occupied some days later he found the reason for it.

The reports and messages of the Turks made really laughable reading.

'Eighteen thousand men are advancing on Deraa, under Sherif Faisal. . . .'

Another read: 'Large attacking force, but not under Faisal, as he is reported three hundred miles away.'

Reports sent south were frantic. 'Cannot get through to stations north, or Damascus. Something wrong with telegraph line. . . .'

Something was very much wrong with the line. Lawrence had taken the precaution to cut it!

Following his fortunate escape from the Deraa machines, Lawrence moved next against Tell el Shehab, having already sent part of his force to deal with Mezerib, which was on the Deraa to Palestine line.

One look at Tell el Shehab was enough. Lawrence was proceeding with great caution now. He edged his way to a vantage point which would give him a clear view of the post, a view which turned out to be much too clear!

He had got his force into position about three hundred yards from the enemy, when he saw reinforcements coming in from the north. There were guns, machine-guns, and hundreds of men! That was quite enough. Lawrence's view of war nowadays was that discretion would save lives, valour would be suicide.

He ordered the retreat, but it had to be done very carefully. If he attracted the slightest attention the new enemy forces could wipe them out without trouble, and it was a very relieved Lawrence who collected his little force a mile or so back.

It had not been an easy journey. Another officer had joined him, and they talked over the situation. Deraa, with three thousand angry Turks,

was only five miles away, and well aware that there were 'hostiles' in the district. In front was the broken line, which by now was probably guarded, and behind was that mixed and very efficient force of Turks and Germans, armed with guns.

As they circled back through the hills they wondered what the local people would do. They were watching from the hills, but for some reason neither fired nor 'told tales'.

Another ticklish situation had passed!

Back on the line at Nasib, Lawrence ordered an attack on the guard there to draw their attention from his own rush on the bridge, and the Turks, firing furiously south, turned round very abruptly when a shattering roar from the north crashed in their ears.

Lawrence had got his bridge!

There was one very important fact. Lawrence was now practically in the position he promised General Allenby, ready to help with the latter's bid for victory on the 19th. Not that the position was a good one, nor was it favourable from most points of view.

Those with Lawrence knew that he meant to get through, but they dared not ask him 'how?' It was a matter of complete trust in the next very difficult days. Viewed from the point of view of forces and positions, his case was absolutely hopeless.

General Allenby was certainly only one hundred miles away to the west, but between him and Lawrence was the whole of the Turkish Army, ignoring those who were still in garrison on the Hejaz railway.

Lawrence's forward base was a hundred miles away in the desert, and the main base nearly two hundred and fifty miles away.

Neither was of any use to him, because he hadn't the time nor the means to reach them.

Lawrence said they must stay 'like the nut in the nut-cracker' until the first news came from Allenby.

Meanwhile, the whole force had something like ten days' supply of ammunition, petrol, and food.

After the ten days ——?

Lawrence had been told what had been done at Mezerib, and he and another officer began to add to the destruction at the junction of the two lines.

They took dynamite and fuses from the tenders and rode off on camels down the line, the cars moving as close as they dared to cover the party.

Lawrence was busy in the station itself, and his assistant began to plant 'tulips' down the line. He did not go far, for as he looked towards Deraa itself he saw a train coming out from the town.

He jumped to his feet and sprinted back to Nazerib, bursting into Lawrence with:

'There's a train coming up!'

Lawrence turned round: 'A plane? That's all right, it can't hurt us.'

'Not a plane,' roared the other desperately, 'but a *train*.'

'Oh, that's different. I expect we'd better light our charges.'

He did not hurry himself, and gradually he and his assistant set some of the charges off, the latter going carefully along lighting the fuses from his cigarette. In a few moments shells began to fall round them. The train had a field-gun on it!

They got on their camels and fled back to the cars.

## CHAPTER XII

*And suddenly one more impatient cried—  
‘Who is the Potter, pray, and who the Pot?’*

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

CAPTAIN PEAKE and the Imperial Camel Corps had already reported and marched away again, having done their share in the fighting. Theirs had been no haphazard demolition. They selected something like five miles of line between Deraa and Damascus, and the line itself, the telegraph wires running alongside, and whatever post was on guard, were effectively destroyed. This was a good ‘stopper’ to any reinforcements being sent from the north, and Lawrence was immensely thankful for what they had done.

As the I.C.C. marched away, in the direction of Azrak, Lawrence decided to follow, in a car, to make certain about planes. On the way he thought he would pay a visit to Umtaiye, where an enemy aeroplane had been seen the day before. His idea was to give it an official ‘welcome’, but once more the element of surprise interfered with his plans.

He drove boldly up to the aerodrome, but the one aeroplane had found two companions. This was a very different matter, but the cars had been seen. He prepared for action and drove straight

at the aerodrome, hoping to get his machine-guns in play before the planes could get into the air, but he was too late, much too late!

Before he could fire a shot, they were not only in the air but were swooping for the armoured cars, and the shots hitting the turret and the armour sounded like a roll of tin-kettle drums, except that for those inside the tune being played was not a pleasant one.

Chasing about in an armoured car and attacking units on the ground was one way of fighting, but when the car became the mark of an aeroplane, those inside began to feel like trapped animals. One or two bombs were dropped, but these did no more than rock the cars with the back-draught.

It was only good luck on the part of Lawrence's drivers, and bad marksmanship on the part of the Turks, that enabled them to escape with no more damage than scratches on what was left of the paint, and a few dents in the armour-plating.

However, he did manage to dispose of one of the machines in the process of dodging the others. It ventured too low and too near, and paid the penalty. A burst from one of the car's guns found its tank; it hit the earth with a terrific bang and was smashed into a twisted ruin by the force of the explosion.

The unwelcome attentions of the enemy aero-

planes reminded Lawrence of his desire for an addition to his own air force, which at the moment consisted of one pilot without a machine!

He ordered the cars away from Umtaiye, and as they roared through the narrow paths of the hills the remaining enemy planes haunted their journey and pelted them with machine-gun bursts until they got tired of the sport.

Some of the Arabs had attempted to keep up with the manœuvring of the cars, and they were unfortunate, for a number of them got in the way of the machine-gun fire and paid the penalty for their rash loyalty to Lawrence.

Once more Lawrence went off on his own, to carry out his original intention of going to Azrak, where he expected to receive a message by aeroplane from General Allenby. He instructed the other cars to 'carry on'.

This they did, and found themselves back at Nasib, where Lawrence had blown up the bridge four days before. There were Turks working on the line, attempting to repair the demolitions, and at the limit of the break a puffing train waited. There seemed to be more workers than soldiers, so the cars rushed forward and 'persuaded' the party and the train back at top speed.

It was rather an amazing yet amusing combat while it lasted, the Turks leaning out of the swaying

carriages and taking pot shots at the cars as they swerved to this and that side of the retreating train. The mobility of the cars was too much for the 'iron horse', but there had to be a limit to the chase. With a final burst, the cars turned and returned to camp, well satisfied with an eventful day which included in its 'bag' one aeroplane and a fight with a railway train!

While Lawrence was away the other officers decided that the Turks had made Umtaiye much too warm for residence, and it was quite probable that they would be back with more machines from Deraa, determined this time to smash them completely. They moved to Um es Sarab, and waited for Lawrence to return.

Every precaution was taken to prevent the aeroplanes—which were flying around all the daylight hours looking for the Arabs—from finding a sign of hostile forces. They hid in grain pits, scattered the camels and the men, and trusted to luck.

At last Lawrence returned, on the 22nd. He had found his messenger at Azrak, flown back to Palestine with him, and returned with three fighting planes. He and the three pilots stepped out and settled down to some sort of breakfast, but hardly had they started when there was a shout from the look-out. Lawrence was in the middle of reading to a rather excited group of British officers news of



General Allenby

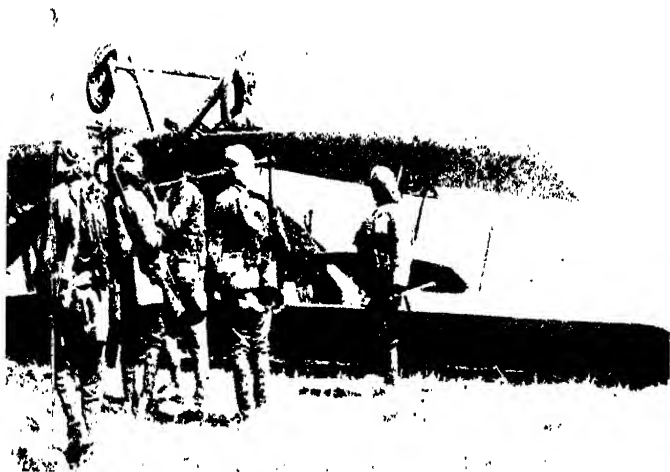


Camelry off for a raid.





He hit a boulder, and turned completely over on his back '—  
Junior's machine just after the crash.





General Allenby's advance, but they all turned at the shout.

Two Turkish scouts and a two-seater were sailing up from the east! The new arrivals forgot their breakfasts. They were back in the cockpits of their machines and soaring up to meet the enemy before those on the ground had time to scatter.

As they rose the enemy were over Lawrence's little group. They dropped two bombs just as the British planes took off, and luckily missed them, and before they could get into anything like a favourable position for an air-fight the two-seater was twisting to earth in flames.

Lawrence's air force quickly landed, for the scouts had fled hurriedly, and, having the speed of the British machines, got away. They ran back to their breakfasts, amidst the shrill cheers of the Arabs and delighted congratulations from Lawrence.

They were not to get their breakfast yet, though. It says something for the Turks that they braved another attack when they knew there were three machines against their two. However, they came swooping down, their guns rattling round the stationary planes.

Back rushed the pilots, and in a few seconds the fight was on again. This time one of the Turkish scouts went down, and the other went back without

waiting for any more. It was the end of the enemy air offensive.

Once more Lawrence and his men flagged their air force back. They could cheer no more, because their voices were just hoarse croaks.

The pilots resumed their breakfast, excitedly discussing the swift events of the morning. It was such a change from the routine air surveys they had been doing for some weeks past.

As one pilot said to the other: 'Here we have been waiting weeks for a scrap. We come down here, and get two birds before breakfast!'

There was a deeper reason for satisfaction amongst Lawrence's force. While the Turks had not been doing really serious damage, they had been getting five to ten men daily with their constant attacks of machine-gun fire, and it was hard for such untrained natives to 'grin and bear it'. They could not answer back, and Lawrence had no 'devil birds' to swoop on the enemy.

Now, their courage was restored. They had been very near to bolting-point, but there was something so easy and effective in the landing of the machines, their instant take-off, and their destruction of the enemy, that they took it that Allah was once more smiling on their fortunes. All would be well!

Lawrence read to his British companions a

*communiqué* from General Allenby, which was a general note of thanks to Faisal and Lawrence for the work already done, and contained quite exciting news of his advance on the other side of the Jordan.

The period of standstill was at an end, and the small British camp felt at last that they had some war news they could be enthusiastic about. It was a relief from the deadly feeling that the war had settled down on the earth for ever!

Having satisfied his own fellow countrymen with his news, Lawrence then gathered the Arabs round him and translated the message. He did not get far. When he got to the 'great achievements of your gallant troops', there were whoops of delight.

The noise died down and then they heard that the Turks were in retreat. More cheering and firing of shots in the air. Some rushed out of the circle and went tearing down the valley shouting the glad tidings to the world in general. Whether any one heard them or not did not matter. They were happy.

As the names of the villages and towns were read, the Arabs set up a continuous chorus of thanks to Allah, to Faisal, and to Lawrence. The stranglehold of the Turks was loosened. The fear of centuries was being lifted. *El hamdil'allah* (Thanks be to God!).

Confidence being restored amongst his Arab friends, Lawrence came back to the British officers.

To them he painted a slightly different picture. Allenby, he said, had swung the Turks round so that their line of retreat would inevitably be across the Jordan.

The others looked at each other.

Lawrence saw the look and nodded. 'Yes,' he said, 'we shall be right in their path.'

'The Fourth Turkish Army is there,' he added, 'and parts of the Seventh and Eighth Armies.'

Some one remarked that any one of the bits was sufficient to smash their own little force. 'What do you propose to do?'

'Carry on and take Deraa and Damascus.' He ignored the astonished protests of the others. 'Meanwhile we must keep the line broken.'

He explained in detail what Allenby had in mind, taking into consideration Lawrence's own plans, and then said he would go back to Azrak and arrange for the Handley-Page that was there to come over with petrol and food 'to the amount of two tons'.

The other officers looked up. 'Two tons?' They were incredulous. They had heard vaguely of this Handley-Page, but had no idea of its size.

In the afternoon, while the camp was still excitedly discussing the latest news, three machines

were sighted, or rather as they were then seen they were two dots and a machine.

There was a shading of eyes and a straining upwards as the three came nearer. When the great Handley-Page came really into view it astonished the small British section, but to the natives it was a miracle. As one of them exclaimed:

‘By Allah, it is the father of all the devil birds!’



## CHAPTER XIII

### *One Moment in Annihilation's Waste*

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

THE morning of September 23 saw Lawrence on the move again, his force in high spirits and spoiling for action. They were full of yesterday's news. The Handley-Page had gone back, with a promise that it would return later in the day with a load of bombs to present to the Turks in Mafrak.

The air force of three was high up looking for some one to fight; and to set the seal on their advance, Faisal had been up the day before and thanked them personally for their heroic work.

Between Nasib and Mafrak a cautious look-out came in and whispered to Lawrence that the Turks were repairing the broken bridge. He ordered his men to camp, and then went forward. A rise gave him an easy view of the bridge, and he waved the other officers on to 'watch the fun'.

For two hours they sat, well hidden from the unsuspecting enemy. The Turks were working at a furious rate, so quickly that the new, temporary wooden bridge grew before Lawrence's eyes. He discussed their skill, and commented on the clever saving of energy in its construction. 'That is good work,' he said.

Then he called up some of his men, opened fire on the guards, and drove them and the working party off, despite the brave defence offered by a party of German machine-gunners.

Heaping rough bonfires round all the main timber of the bridge, he set fire to it, and in a few minutes the Turks' new bridge was ablaze from end to end.

To put a finishing touch to the damage at that part of the line, he destroyed a further section, and then moved back to Umtaiye.

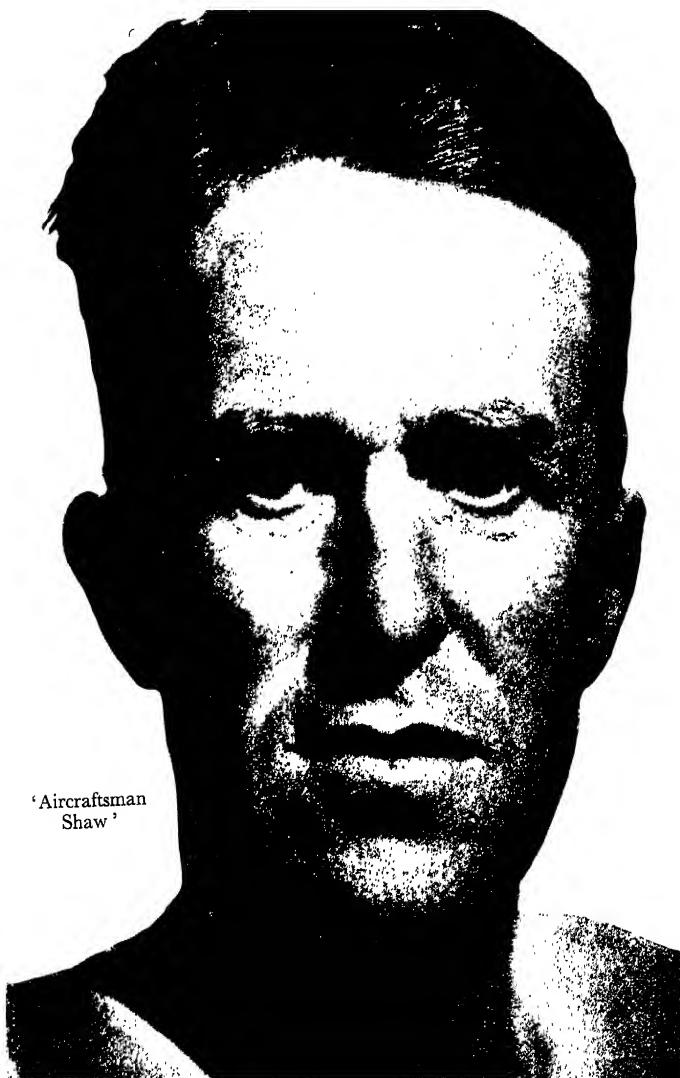
During the night the Arabs heard the low hum of motors overhead, and in the dim night light saw the huge bulk of the Handley-Page. A little while later the air shook to a series of dull thuds from the unseen north. Mafrak was being bombed.

As they looked to the north a red glow flickered up behind the hills. Mafrak was alight.

There was no more sleep for the camp. The Arabs were dancing round in their excitement, and Lawrence and others planned the next moves.

Lawrence found some difficulty in having his own way in this last talk. Deraa and Damascus were the places he wanted. He had fixed Damascus as his goal in 1916. He had told General Allenby he would take Damascus.

The regular officers in the party spoke of caution. Lawrence would have none of it. They once again



'Aircraftman  
Shaw'



pointed out that they were in the line of the Turks' retreat. Lawrence replied that if they were in retreat they could hit them and run. The others were sceptical, declaiming that they would run only into greater danger.

But Lawrence had his plan well formed and would not move from it. He sent the armoured cars back. The country ahead would not do for them, and they would hamper rather than help. Then he suggested that the aeroplanes would be of more use in Palestine now, where every help was needed, and off they went.

He then set his army in motion. He now had about six hundred supposedly trained men, men of the Sherifian army, with six guns and twelve machine-guns. The Arab irregulars with Vickers and Hotchkiss guns helped to swell that number, and there were two or three hundred camel-men and horsemen.

The whole force numbered about a thousand, carrying half rations of water and food. For the rest of the drive they would have to trust to luck to get other supplies, or fight without.

The advance-guard was hardly out of Umtaiye when one of the aeroplanes came tearing back, and after circling two or three times dropped a message.

It was picked up and hurried over to Lawrence. 'Large force cavalry approaching from railway.'

Lawrence read it again and hesitated, but only for a moment. He gave the signal for the force to carry on. 'Large.' What did that mean? Hundreds? Thousands?

He pushed his scouts far ahead, with orders to report back so soon as the enemy came in sight.

Between Nasib and Mafrak the first stragglers began to come up from the south, and immediately Lawrence spread his men on the hills on either side. They began to snipe at the hurrying Turks, some of whom dropped behind the rocks and attempted to reply to this new attack. The others—with one desire only, escape—increased the pace of their retreat and struggled north.

Occasionally a body of the Arab horsemen would swing out from a bend in the valley and with shrill cries swoop down on the edge of the fleeing enemy, dash in, kill, and turn for the hills.

The narrow gorge began to fill up, and in the end the desperate Turks could stand the pace no longer. In an attempt to save their lives they abandoned all the transport and the cannon. The bustle of the retreat became a headlong flight. Sniped at from the hills, raided on all sides by the fierce rushes of the Arab tribesmen, frightened that if they did not hurry north the pursuing British would get them, they scurried forward.

The road along which the Turks were retreating

was a wadi, an old river bed, dried up for centuries and used only for camel caravans. Precipitous crags and rocks rose sheer on either side, with edges that tore the arms and legs when any attempt was made to find a footing.

The Turks were driven into what remained of the narrow, winding track of the valley. They could not scatter. There were horses, men, camels, transport, guns—a hopeless fear-stricken mass.

As they fled pell-mell north, death swooped on them from all sides. Bullets from unseen marksmen dropped them in the path of unheeding, crushing feet. The stragglers at the sides fell to the swords and daggers of the raiding horsemen. Others were knocked underfoot by the scattering rush of animals.

And then death, more horrible than ever, dropped on them from the skies. All the aeroplanes had to do was to follow the winding line of the retreating force and drop their bombs.

In the end the airmen got tired of what they thought was nothing else but murder, and left the shambles of the valley, sick of what they had seen and what they had done.

It had not been warfare as they knew it, but just murder!

The main retreating force Lawrence left severely alone. He could not afford to engage it openly,

and he carried on his guerrilla tactics until night and exhaustion slowed his men down. Then he halted and made camp.

It was an uneasy night, with the hills full of strange sounds, stray shots, and alarms. In the morning he moved on to the line, and the Turkish posts between Ghazale and Ezra surrendered more through astonishment than anything else. That an enemy force should dare to break through their lines and attack so near Deraa was unbelievable!

While Lawrence held the stations he destroyed the line, and for the rest of the operations that put a stop to all rail movement south of Deraa. He talked with some of the Turks, and learned from them that there was no certainty in the messages which had reached them as to the strength of the forces which the Turks thought were against them. There was some mention of a thousand Arabs, and this extended in other reports to several thousands. There was a hint of panic in all the messages.

Lawrence thought it wise to move a little away from the line as he pushed slowly through the restless hills. He was not despondent, but was very nervous. The men themselves now realized that they were right in the middle of the enemy. It was now September 26, and Lawrence had had no news whatever of the position on the British side.

His little force, weakened by losses during the

hill fighting, more or less dropped exhausted to the ground where they stopped to camp, but after two or three hours' sleep he got them on their feet again and moving before the dawn. He was anxious to keep away from the main road if he could, and yet be within striking distance of any stragglers thrown out by the enemy.

Everybody was on edge now. A bend in a valley might bring them face to face with the enemy. There was no assurance that the hillmen were friendly, and in any case shots had already been fired at the Arabs absolutely through ignorance as to who they were and what they were doing in the country.

Food was getting low, and there was very little water left for either animals or men.

At dawn Lawrence got his force to Sheikh Saad, but he was shocked into sudden action. Two Austro-Turk machine-gun companies were ahead, in steady marching order. They looked a formidable crowd, but before they could turn and get their weapons into action Lawrence was on them and the ominous circle of fierce-looking Arabs startled them into surrender. It was just touch and go, and but for Lawrence's quick dash, they would have got their guns into action and literally mown down the whole of his force in a very few minutes. A very narrow escape!



## CHAPTER XIV

*And that inverted Bowl we call The Sky,  
Whereunder crawling coop't we live and die,  
Lift not thy hands to It for help—for It  
Rolls impotently on as Thou or I.*

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

WHATEVER Lawrence's thoughts were about the position, his men were beginning to show signs of strain. He had kept them on the move practically continuously for fourteen days, with very few hours' rest each night, fighting, retreating, dashing up and down the line, living on a decreasing store of rations, and carrying on in an increasing uncertainty whether they were not gradually moving farther and farther into a trap.

Undoubtedly it was only the confidence with which Lawrence directed the operations that kept the force together. Otherwise, in keeping with their usual habit, they would have 'packed up and gone home' days ago.

The men were hardly camped when a plane, flying low, dropped a message which gave rise to mixed emotions. The opening said that part of General Barrow's division was near Remthe. That was good. The second part added that two columns of retreating Turks were converging on Sheikh Saad—one about four thousand strong,

the other about two thousand. That hinted at danger!

Lawrence called for a hurried 'war-talk'. It was quickly agreed that they could do nothing with the larger force—'sheer suicide' was the verdict of one. The other might be worth attention.

Lawrence got his men on the move once more, this time for Tafas, to tackle the two thousand. At the same time he sent a small section to rouse up the peasants in the hills through which the larger force was passing, with the idea of worrying it and harassing it as it straggled through.

'No attack must be made. Pick off all the stragglers!' were his orders.

That section on the way, Lawrence continued his march. He was keyed up for any sort of opposition now, and it was not long before he met the first signs of the smaller column. It was an infantry battalion, just moving ahead without any real formation, and in an hour they were scattered, with heavy loss.

Moving forward with all possible speed he topped the rise looking down on Tafas. Some of the houses were full of smoke, and about two miles ahead the rear-guard of the enemy force which had occupied the village was disappearing into the distant haze.

His progress through the village was an awful business. The bodies of at least twenty children

were lying in the dust, from small babies to toddling infants of four and five years of age. Most of them had been killed with lances.

Lawrence looked at them, and at the retreating Turks in the distance. Rage was mounting in his heart and in his head. His long-smouldering hatred of the enemy was bursting into flame. He saw women lying dead near their houses, horribly treated, and his lips tightened to stop the curses he wanted to utter.

The Arabs had gathered round the two or three Englishmen who were pointing out the pitiful dead bodies. These children and these women were their own relations. Tafas was part of their own country. They circled aimlessly about, crying in high, weird, uncanny tones to Allah. Some turned to mount their horses and dash after the enemy.

Lawrence stopped them, quickly, and with an angry sternness.

Then came a piercing, unearthly yell from behind! Lawrence and his men swung round. Talal, the Sheikh of the village, who had been one of his best fighters, had just come galloping in. He had heard the news of the disaster to his village. Even as he reined in his horse one little bundle of clothes staggered to its feet, and, crying 'Don't hit me', fell for the last time, dead.

Talal's face was working terribly. His eyes stared

ahead at the path the Turks were taking. Then he shouted again.

No one attempted to speak to him. What could be said to a man who had found his pleasant little village turned from its quiet everyday life into a scene of massacre?

Before he could be stopped he wheeled his horse, dug in his spurs, and shouting his fighting cry at the top of his voice, set his mount at full speed after the rear-guard of the enemy.

Lawrence could only stare. The tragic yet magnificent sight held him and the men around him as if in a spell. They saw the Turks turn, and in a few seconds Talal was on them. But the drumming hoofs had sounded their challenge, and just as he raised himself high in his stirrups and gave one more fierce yell a volley from rifles and machine-guns literally blasted him from his saddle, and he and his gallant little horse dropped dead in the middle of the enemy's ranks!

There was a strange silence. It was rather like a tableau. The Turks were looking down at this man who had charged them single-handed, and Lawrence and his force were still held spell-bound by that last mad charge.

Lawrence seemed to be crushed for a second by some heavy, oppressive emotion. He then straightened his shoulders, looked once more at

the retreating enemy, the murdered women and children, and at the fierce, angry tribesmen.

He split his small force into three. 'Get into the hills, pick up any who will fight for the cause, and fall on the Turks from all sides. The order is "Kill". I want no prisoners!'

Lawrence himself was a fighting fury, but where the rage of the Arabs was an overmastering emotion which cared nothing for death so long as they took a Turk with them in the death-embrace, his was a cold rage. He directed the attack not only to wipe out past wrongs, but he had his own shame at Deraa to blot out. He managed to be here, there, and everywhere, scheming and drawing the Turks into corners from which there was no escape but death.

The Turks had no time to make a fighting formation. From three sides hordes of grief-stricken, vengeful men fell on them and split them asunder. They drove them into the hills, into little corners, and killed. They circled small parties who fought desperately yet hopelessly out in the open until the last man and the last gun were silent. Those who raised their hands in surrender found no mercy.

In this orgy of killing the hillsmen also paid their debts. Armed with knives and bludgeons, they hung on to the outskirts of the fight, and where a Turk staggered out to the edge, seeking escape,

they fell on him like a pack of wolves and cut and beat him to death.

It was the aftermath of days of strain. Even though all in the little force had had their fill of war and its horrors, and knew as well as most just what it meant, this last useless butchery of little children turned them into savages whose only desire was to kill.

Kill they did, until rifles grew too hot to fire and arms grew too tired to wield them. There was no 'cease fire'. They gathered into grim ranks, the survivors of the bitter struggle, and looked at each other. Lawrence, the two or three Englishmen with him, and all the others had revenged Tafas and Talal!

But the dreadful day was not ended.

Reinforcements ahead had rounded up a crowd of the enemy's transport men—Austrians, Turks, and a few Germans. They were fresh on the scene, and looked astonished, if not a little sick, at the grim battle-field.

The prisoners huddled together. They had seen their comrades die. They had heard cries of surrender go unheeded. What death would they meet?

Lawrence's rage was spent. Instead, he felt sick, in heart and in body. He was tired of murder, for that is what he thought it, and eyed the prisoners

with indifference. There were some wild threats from some of the Arabs, but it was like the muttering of a retreating storm, until a shout swung them round.

Lawrence ran forward to where an Arab, nearly gibbering with rage, was pointing to a poor wreck of a man who was lying in a corner, pinned to the ground with two saw bayonets. Even as he ran the Arabs crowded round, gave one look at their comrade killed in so cruel a way—and dashed back to where the prisoners were shrinking into a dull-eyed group, like cattle waiting for the slaughter.

Two or three were down and hacked to death before Lawrence could race back to the scene. He gave one look at the circle of maddened Arabs closing in, saw the forms of the two or three men who had just died, and gave what to him seemed the only possible order.

‘Turn your guns on the prisoners,’ he said, in an even, toneless voice, to the Hotchkiss gunners.

Before the Arabs could rush forward, the guns rattled out, and they fired and fired until there was no movement left. It was a mass execution to save the poor wretches from a worse fate. Oppression breeds revenge, and Lawrence felt that at least he had justified his own conscience in the matter.

The Arabs themselves were surprised at the

swiftness of Lawrence's action, but they made no attempt to interfere. He presented a hard, forbidding aspect. The heap of dead in front of him had filled him with an overwhelming disgust, disgust at the lengths to which he had been driven by his own hatred, disgust that man had to do this thing.

His face was a mask. His own clothing and that of all his comrades, Arab and British, reeked of sudden and awful death. Everywhere the eye looked it saw death and suffering. The wounded were lying huddled up in hollows or in rows on the level stretches, groaning for water which the living could not easily give. There were no medical men to help them. Those who could walk or hobble along received rough, very rough attention, from their comrades, but those who were too badly wounded received swiftly the merciful release they pleaded for with their eyes.

Now that the killing mood was gone, those on their feet went carefully round the grim heaps, to see that none were left to suffer needlessly, and for the rest of the day Lawrence and his men stayed in the valley, uneasy, suspicious, jumping at every sound, waiting for news.

There were about eight hundred effectives left who were capable of carrying on, and every man drove himself to action only with the will to finish

what Lawrence had started. All were tired out, responding with protests against every new activity, but they were desperately resolved to follow Lawrence, wherever that leadership took them.

The hills were full of firing. Lawrence could not, would not, move out. The main enemy force might be in the next valley, and it would be sheer suicide to go forward, and, through carelessness, ruin all the brave work that had been done.

The suspense was the more agonizing because all felt that triumph was so very near, but a false move now would put them in the path of a desperate enemy whose very numbers would outweigh and obliterate them.

The dark hours of the night went slowly on, with all rest denied by fear, but with the dawn the continued absence of any attack revived drooping spirits.

Lawrence got his force together, and told them to stand to for orders. He then went on with another officer, towards Deraa. His observations were hurried, but he soon realized that now was the time to strike one last heavy blow at the remnants of the Turkish might. What was left of the Fourth Turkish Army was collected round Deraa. The few hundreds of men Lawrence still had could make little impression on them, but there were reports of British cavalry having arrived

near Remthe. It was part of General Gregory's brigade, and luckily for Lawrence he ran into the officer commanding the horse artillery.

He dashed forward, shouting out in English as he neared the English troops. It was necessary, for he and the others presented a wild appearance, and the British troops in their ignorance might fire on them, thinking they were hostile forces.

He pulled up in front of the British officer, who, resentful and suspicious, eyed the queer figure who was talking to him without any reverence whatever for authority.

'Are you in charge?'

There was no 'Sir' attached to the abrupt query, and the officer bristled at once.

For a few seconds it was touch and go which way the little argument would end, but Lawrence succeeded in convincing the artillery officer that, even though this way of conducting war was all wrong, and there was no authority for it whatever in the text-books, the artillery were really wanted.

Lawrence saw the artillery move off, and very shortly after salvo after salvo went crashing out—they were in action. It was no victory for him, this overriding of authority. He had reached the stage where he was tired of war, tired of the atrocities he had seen, tired of what he felt to be nothing less than wasteful, horrible destruction.

He turned back to put his own little crowd of men into action again. He would not talk to his fellow officers, and in a little while they were on their way to Deraa. The tribes in the hills had stopped 'sitting on the fence'. The Arabs had the Turks on the run, and each and every man who could fight at all joined hands in the destruction of their hated oppressors.

Here and there were glimpses of British cavalry in action. The Arabs joined forces, and Deraa became the centre of one last orgy of killing. Far ahead the shells of the horse artillery rained their shower of death on the main body of the enemy, and for the rest of the day the Turks vainly endeavoured to escape the inevitable end.

By dark they were fleeing from extinction. Lawrence was on one side, and the blood-thirsty Nuri ibn Shala'an and Nasr—two formidable Arab Sheikhs—on the other flank, with their eager followers taking toll of the disorganized oppressors.

Here and there isolated actions were being fought by little bodies of Turks against yelling circles of tribesmen. Through the hills and over the passes to Mania they fled, there to run into yet another trap.

Lawrence had spread his net well. His trips in former months, when he had made his appeals to the northern tribes to rise and fall on the enemy

when he gave the word, bore fruit. No matter where the Turks fled, they met death and disaster. On September 28 they were driven out of Deraa.

The Arabs remembered that the Turks who had blotted out Tafas had retreated into Deraa. It was one of the main towns. From this place most of the atrocities had been directed. Here, some of the Arab leaders had been tortured and hanged months before.

Now they had the Turks at their mercy. It was more like a rat hunt than war. Lawrence could not hold them, even though he and a hurriedly picked band of men did not hesitate to shoot every Arab they saw disobeying orders against committing atrocities.

For two or three hours the insurgent tribesmen worked their will on the town. Lawrence and the few stalwarts round him went about the grim business of stopping the wholesale murder. While they shot down their own men in one street, they could hear the shrieks of men and women in the next.

Deraa represented to the yelling Arabs a five-hundred-year-old monument of cruelty and oppression, and they were determined to destroy it, to break down the living people and the inanimate houses.

At last Lawrence restored order. It was one

thing for the Arabs to kill and loot, but the punishment was death, and the executioners were their own leaders. Then, with two or three of the British officers who had rallied round him, he waited for General Barrow.

When the General arrived, relations became strained. As he rode through he saw himself what his advance guards had already told him, that the town was in an appalling state owing to the excesses of the Arabs.

There was a stormy scene between the General and Lawrence. The former was disgusted and shocked at what he had seen, and did not mince his words as he upbraided Lawrence for the excesses committed by his 'murdering Arabs'.

Lawrence cut him short, very curtly.

'Most of the Arab dead you see in the town met their death at my hands. The hillsmen were here first, and the murder has stopped because I stopped it!'

This led to a more friendly attitude between the two, and very soon General Barrow and his staff—although still curious and a little astonished at this odd little group of English officers and the redoubtable Lawrence, the man whose name was now a byword through the Palestine forces—began to mix and talk for a while.

The Sherifian forces were a new thing to the

British and Indian units, and in any case they presented a vast contrast. The compact and orderly appearance of the regular units suggested an army, suggested fighting. By their side the Sherifians and the Arabs looked a mere rabble. For sixteen or seventeen days they had ridden, slept, and fought without time for the slightest attention to cleanliness or appearance. Most of them were smothered from head to foot in sweat and blood. Those who were wounded were bandaged with dirty and sandcaked rags which had become part of the wounds, stuck hard and fast to the healing skin. There wasn't a decent thing about them. From head to foot they were dusty, dirty bundles of ragged humanity, the wildest crowd that could possibly be imagined. They looked what they had been for the past three weeks, mere savages.

Some of the Arab irregulars had already moved north to Damascus, but Lawrence and the others pushed on, leaving a detachment of the Sherifians to take charge of Deraa. This was the 29th, and with the British troops fast moving on Damascus, Lawrence was in a hurry.

He had few ideals left now, but one thing he did want, and that was that the Arabs, who themselves had been mainly responsible for freeing Arabia from the Turkish yoke, should be first in Damascus.

The Arab flag should be the first to fly from the Town Hall!

The race between the British and Australian cavalry and the Arab irregulars seemed without purpose, but there was much behind Lawrence's resolve. If the Arabs could reach Damascus first it would be the final triumph of his campaign; it would set the seal on a new day in history—the freedom of Arabia by Arabians.



## CHAPTER XV

*And Lo! the Hunter of the East has caught  
The Sultan's Turret in a Noose of Light.*

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

As they neared Damascus, the horizon was a cloud of fire and smoke. There were constant explosions. The retreating Turks had fired their ammunition dumps, both large and small, and the hills in the north were in a constant roll of thunder as each dull thud marked the spread of fire.

Nearer the city the uproar increased. Some of the townsmen and the villagers who lived on the outskirts came crowding round Lawrence and his men, showering on them blessings and thanks for their delivery from slavery.

Now the signs of war increased. Where before there had been an odd body here and there, the dead began to be seen in piles.

There was no time for wondering and wandering. Damascus lay ahead—the goal set both for Lawrence himself and for the Arabs.

It was about seven o'clock on the morning of September 30 when Lawrence approached his goal. As he and his men rode in they received a tumultuous greeting. Syrians, Christians, and Arabs were cheering and shouting. From the

housetops flowers were being thrown, and women were emptying scent, both liquid and powdered, from the windows down on the little cavalcade now prancing through the streets. Arabs were giving thanks to Allah, and the others were thanking God, while those who had no God to thank were just shouting for sheer joy.

Sherifs Nasr and Nuri had already gone in, and as Lawrence rode up to the Town Hall he saw some men of the Australian Light Horse moving about. He looked over at the hall, and saw something which aroused a queer little emotion in him, astonishing because he thought he would never be able to 'feel' again.

The Arab flag *was* flying over the Town Hall!

When he went in, however, he found that things were not quite what they seemed.

Abd el Kader and his brother, two Arabs who had all along favoured the cause of the Turks and hindered the work of Lawrence with their spying and lying activities, had had the audacity to take charge of Damascus and declare themselves its governors 'in the name of the Arab peoples!'

Lawrence did not hesitate. He marched straight into their office, and literally bundled the two renegades and their supporters out of the hall, hastening their departure with the drawn rifles and revolvers of his own little bodyguard.



'To all outward appearance he was a veritable prince'—Lawrence as 'the centre of operations.'





Would-be looters being turned back by the Arab regulars, and their booty confiscated.



Arab warriors to be.

The attitude of the crowd gathered outside was a little uncertain. Abd el Kader had already announced that the Arabs had taken over Damascus, and here he was being thrown out neck and crop! It was an ugly moment, but Lawrence was making no mistake.

He posted Hotchkiss and Vickers gunners round the square, cleared it with a few bursts, and installed a correct, though temporary, Sherifian government in the town.

Twenty-three months before he had told Faisal, far away in southern Arabia, that 'it was a long way to Damascus'.

That way had been hazardous. One by one a string of defences along a five-hundred-mile front had been destroyed or made useless, the tribes had been held together, the Arabs had become a nation, and the might of the Turks had been broken.

Against almost impossible odds, fighting with a ragged, ill-disciplined, murdering crowd of ruffians against trained soldiers, handicapped by the scoffing attitude of the British military authorities—Lawrence had succeeded in what he had promised.

Whatever else happened, at this moment Arabia was one nation, and he had made it.

With his main force of a little under a thousand

men he had carried through one of the most remarkable campaigns in the world's history of warfare.

They had been responsible for the killing of five thousand Turks, had taken eight thousand prisoners, twenty-five to thirty guns, nearly two hundred machine-guns, and thirteen aeroplanes. The total casualties in the Arab regular forces were something like a hundred and twenty killed and wounded.

The Turks had been broken, completely and utterly, and it had been Lawrence's plan that had led to their destruction.

When the first rejoicings were over in Damascus, Lawrence set about restoring order. The action of Abd el Kader had upset many of the inhabitants, and now most of them were reverting to their old racial jealousies.

Arabs of the various tribes, feeling that their work was finished with the capture of Damascus, began to remember they had certain blood-feuds to work off, and fighting was general in many of the streets. Christians were fighting Arabs. Arabs were fighting what few Turks were left. Those Syrians who were sympathetic to France were opposed to all of them. For something like twenty-four hours, Damascus was a huge mix-up of fighting factions, and then, once more, Lawrence

imposed his will on them, and with his little group of gunners, made his law *the* law for all Damascus.

The town itself was in a dreadful state. The streets were full of dead, and the hospitals were full of dead and dying. All day long the carts rumbled over the cobbles, carrying the bodies out to open ground away from the town.

Lawrence next gave his attention to the hospitals. These were in a shocking state. All the wards were full, and men were lying on the beds and on the floor, both dead and dying.

There were only two or three doctors left. All the rest had fled with the Turks, leaving those in the hospital to their fate. What food there was, was stale. The water was contaminated, and it seemed impossible to restore conditions in which the wounded would have at least a chance to fight for life.

It was a strange sight. Lawrence had had a chance to get into clean raiment, and as he picked his way in and out the wards his pure white dress seemed to have no place in this horror of disease. With a band of volunteers he began to clear away the dead.

They were bundled on to carts and taken away to great deep trenches that were being dug on the hill-side north of the town, and as fast as one was

filled and covered another was dug. Then brush and shovel came into play, sweeping and piling the filth into heaps which were quickly removed and burnt or disinfected beyond possible danger. Chaos was gradually changed to order, and then began the swift work to save those who still had a spark of life in them. Once that was on the way, Lawrence left that part of his responsibilities in capable hands, and passed back to matters of government.

General Allenby arrived on October 3. He had been authorized by the Government in London, on October 1, to recognize the hoisting of the Arab flag, and he was hurrying to tell the Arab forces. To him it was the conferring of an honour on the Arabs, but when Faisal came in later in the day to make what was more or less an official entry into the town, Lawrence and he had some difficulty in understanding why the Allies should be so kind as to permit the Arabs to take over.

Lawrence and Faisal and the Arabs had now been fighting for two years to do just one thing—clear Arabia of the Turks and take Damascus. It was as if they had been told only when they had succeeded that they had done very well and should have some reward.

However, the meeting was quickly over, and,

trying to forget some of the doubts that had arisen in their minds at this strange official message, Lawrence and Faisal made a tour of the city.

This first visit was to the tomb of Saladin, one of the greatest fighters in all the history of the Crusades. In 1908 the Kaiser had paid a visit to Damascus and with pomp and ceremony placed a flag and bronze wreath on the tomb, the latter inscribed, 'From one great Emperor to another!' The flag and wreath were removed. The modern emperor was on his way to the world's rubbish heap!



## CHAPTER XVI

*But leave the Wise to wrangle, and with me  
The Quarrel of the Universe let be:*

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

ON October 30, 1918, the Turks accepted the peace terms offered them by the Allies, and this was speedily followed by the Armistice of November 11, 1918.

Lawrence had withdrawn from the scenes of his triumphs, and was in England when the Armistice was declared. He then proceeded to Paris for the peace negotiations, and there began what he then knew to be a losing fight for the carrying out of the promises that had been made during the War.

Lawrence had fought his battles during the past two years both in Arabia and in the staff headquarters of the Allies—knowing that very few of the promises which had secured the Arabs' help would be fulfilled.

Even when King Hussein had received certain pledges from the British Government, the Allies had already decided what would happen to the Turkish Empire if the Allies won the War.

Hussein and his Arabs fought because they had a simple, childish belief that Arabia would be one empire from north to south if the Allies won the

War. At the same time that this empire had been promised them, Italy, France, Greece, and even Russia had seen and agreed on a map which gave them best part of the Turkish Empire between them, and left to the Arabs a very narrow strip of Arabia as a reward for their stand for their own country.

All the time Lawrence was planning and scheming to hold the wavering Arabs together and weld them into a strong enough weapon to split the Turks asunder, he knew that the diplomatists had already made it impossible either for him to keep his word, or for the British Government to dare to meet in full its first promises to King Hussein.

The Peace Conference of 1919 was the scene of Lawrence's final disillusionment. All that he suspected became known, and Faisal had to hear that, because Britain had given her word to her greater Allies, and because the British authorities themselves had no settled policy regarding Arabia, the Arabs would have to be content with the shadow, and not the substance; with the original dream and not its fulfilment.

Lawrence remained as a central, romantic figure in the Peace discussions. He tried to obtain a more satisfactory 'share of the spoils' for Faisal. He tells one story of how he discussed a particularly impor-

tant declaration with Faisal, most of which was Lawrence's own idea of the situation. As always, Faisal was content to listen to what Lawrence suggested and then agree to the course of action outlined.

The Emir Faisal, dignified, even regal, stood up in the Conference, and rapidly, in full sonorous tones, declaimed what Lawrence and two or three other Arabic experts knew full well to be parts of the Koran.

Then Lawrence, quietly and steadily, translated Faisal's 'address' to the world's statesmen into an impassioned appeal which covered all that the Sherifians had done for the great and mighty Allies, and what they expected as a reward for services well and faithfully rendered.

But it was all words, and when Faisal left to tell his fellow countrymen of his failure to secure an Arabian Empire, he undoubtedly took an impression with him that Lawrence himself had let them down, that he had promised too much, that he had played beyond the limit of his power, and lost.

The trouble with Lawrence was that he was, so far as diplomats were concerned, much too sensitive of his honour. Only his loyalty to the cause of the Allies as a whole had made it possible for the Arabian revolt to be carried through to its triumph.

The Sherifians fought because they could see an empire as a prize. Lawrence fought realizing full well that the empire had no more substance than a mirage; he knew that when the truth became known to the Arabs, they would think him a liar and a traitor.

France was much too strong a competitor in the fight for favours, and her persistent campaign for recognition in Syria led to Faisal's being expelled from Damascus in August 1920. Lawrence, dogged as ever, tried once more to secure for Faisal some recompense for his troubled reign in Damascus, a reward which would restore Faisal in the eyes of the Arabs and in some way fulfil part of Lawrence's own pledge to secure him a crown.

In 1921, when Palestine and Mesopotamia were transferred to the control of the British Foreign Office, Mr. Winston Churchill asked Lawrence if he would help in the administration, and during the time he acted as adviser he succeeded in establishing Faisal as King of Iraq.

In the meantime Lawrence had returned to Oxford and resumed his studies there. He was busy writing his first manuscript describing the Arabian revolt. He lived in Oxford most of the time, but did not encourage 'talking'. Occasionally he would write to the papers, but he was

still one of the 'mystery' figures thrown up by the War.

Lawrence did not go unrecognized by his country. There were rewards for his 'distinguished service', but he did not want rewards, particularly when he felt so strongly that the purpose for which they had been given had completely failed.

He had already taken some means to say that he did not feel it right that he should accept the honours for which he had been gazetted, and when he appeared before the King he took a step which required greater moral strength, probably, than any he had applied to other problems in his life.

Quietly he told the King that he felt bound to refuse the honours conferred on him. The ideals for which he had fought had gone, the promises he had made on behalf of his country had been broken, and he found it impossible to accept reward for what he considered to be failure.

It was a final refusal of recognition for his services to his country. The official reports of the Arabian revolt carefully omitted all mention of Lawrence's name. The higher command had taken the credit for the defeat and destruction of the Turkish armies. The Peace Conference had left him with a feeling of something like hatred for the easy way the Arabs' claims had been put to

one side. Faisal had returned to his country with a suspicion that the Arabs had been 'sold'.

His triumph had been turned to complete failure by the gentlemanly squabble amongst the great Allies regarding the division of the spoils. To use an Eastern simile, 'his face had been blackened'—in other words he had been insulted—and the whole of his Arab comrades had been included in that insult.

Unquestionably Lawrence was worthy of the highest honour his country could give him, but, judged by his own high standard, he felt he had ultimately failed to merit reward, and when he left his decorations in the King's hands he shut the door finally and irrevocably on any possibility that official England would thank him appropriately for his contribution to the defeat of the enemy.

Then an American, from a rather mistaken idea of 'telling the world' what a great man Lawrence was, took Covent Garden Theatre for a time in 1920 and showed what was actually a very cleverly arranged cinematograph record of the fighting in Arabia and Palestine, mainly centred on Lawrence's work. With the foundation of about a fortnight's film-work in and near Akaba, he built up a remarkable and colourful picture which took London by storm.

Covent Garden Theatre was packed night after night, and inevitably the newspapers began to look for 'Lawrence of Arabia', or 'The uncrowned prince of Arabia' as the American was pleased to call him.

If Lawrence hated public life, he hated publicity even more, and he was thoroughly disgusted at the unwanted prominence which was being given to the affair.

At last, he sought privacy in 1922 by enlisting in the Royal Air Force under the name of Ross. For a few months he was really happy. He was certainly, as an ordinary soldier, just as untidy as when he wore an officer's uniform during the War, and the army authorities gave up trying to mould him to their disciplinary code.

In January 1923 an officer who had served in the East during the War was making a round of the camp at Uxbridge when his attention was attracted to Lawrence. There was something vaguely familiar about the man, and he asked in the orderly office who he was. According to the records he was Aircraftsman Ross.

'Ross?' The officer shook his head. That didn't fit the picture he had formed in his mind.

For two or three days he watched him quietly, trying to solve the puzzle. 'Ross' was standing in an attitude reminiscent of former days, eyes on the

ground, head slightly on one side, hands folded loosely in front of him.

Immediately the name leaped to the officer's mind. 'Ross' was the great Colonel Lawrence.

Whatever his motive really was, he gave his information to the press, and the Uxbridge camp became so pestered with press men, both reporters and photographers, that the Air Force authorities were compelled to put an end to the situation by discharging 'Ross'.

Despite his protests the discharge went through, and he had to hide from the prying press for about a month. In March he sought the help of the military authorities, and by means of influence from 'high quarters' he enlisted in the Tank Corps, this time in the name of 'Shaw'.

The enlistment was a normal affair, and the men in the Tank Corps entertained the much-sought 'Colonel Lawrence' unawares. He had secured a promise that if he could serve two years in the Tank Corps without incident he could rejoin the Royal Air Force.

For a time 'Shaw's' life in the Bovington Camp of the 1st Depot Battalion, Tank Corps, was the unnoticed existence of a number in the army. Then his own little peculiarities began to mark him out for notice. His comrades knew, in the way that such things became known in army camps, that

he had missed the usual educational courses, his record of pre-army education having given the depot officer a shock.

Even a Quarter-Master's clerk sometimes has to 'do' a parade, but this 'Shaw' missed them all.

He seemed to have a permanent 'pass' which gave him freedom from camp each evening, and at the conclusion of his day's duty he would be off on a motor-cycle, speeding along the Wool road to some destination unknown.

'Shaw' was never in the mess room. He did not eat regular meals, and seemed to have a fancy to get what little food he wanted at one of the civilian canteens attached to the camp. He was always buying fruit.

One other remarkable fact, enough to single 'Shaw' out for all the rumours an army camp can circulate, was the more extraordinary one that he never appeared on pay parade!

Slowly he became the centre of attention. There were hoarse whispers that this 'Shaw' was the one and only Colonel Lawrence, but he seemed to shrink into such insignificance in his uniform that those who obtained a newspaper photograph of 'Lawrence' could never be certain that the two were one and the same person.

The mystery spread from the men's messes to

the officers' messes, and 'Shaw' became the subject of bets.

Whether he was absolutely oblivious of the interest he was creating in the camp, or whether he ignored it as a matter of policy, cannot be clearly proved. Probably 'high authorities' heard the rumours, and, knowing what they did, effectively and officially stopped them.

## CHAPTER XVII

*Now the New Year reviving old Desires,  
The Thoughtful Soul to Solitude retires.*

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

'SHAW' cycled, read, and wrote. Some of his brief holidays were spent with the famous novelist, Thomas Hardy, and at Christmas-time, 1923, he and Mr. and Mrs. George Bernard Shaw had lunch with Mr. Hardy. The two 'Shaws' must have found something akin in their natures. Their friendship had been quickly formed, and grew rapidly into a mutual respect which did much to break the monotony of Lawrence's existence in the Army.

In August 1925 he managed to get his long-sought transfer back to the Royal Air Force. He had given up trying to hide. Even if people knew him, he felt that, under the protection of the military authority he had so long despised, he would find more actual rest from the persecution of popularity than if he were a private individual.

The world lost a fine engineer in Lawrence. His real interest in the Royal Air Force was in the engines, and when he could not put his inventive mind to work on them, he turned it on to his motor-cycle, or rather to the series of machines which passed through his hands.

He was for ever altering the timing, always tuning up the engine to get the highest possible speed. There was something in the sensation of speed which brought a deep satisfaction to his soul, and he was never happier than when, the day's work done, he took to the lonely roads and set his machine to its flight along the highways, until the rising hum of its motor would sing the one song to him that he loved—the song of speed.

He spent practically all his spare time in Dorset, and rarely missed seeing the Hardys. Thomas Hardy looked forward to his visits, and his last call was a sad one.

Hardy's health was none too good, and when in November 1926 Lawrence called to see him before he embarked for India, the leave-taking was an affectionate one. Hardy went to the little porch of his cottage to watch his friend set off on his motor-cycle.

It was never an easy machine to start, and Hardy, remembering the minutes he had waited before while Lawrence vainly kicked the handle down, went indoors for a shawl. Lawrence, at the same time, was anxious about Hardy's health, and fearing that the waiting would not do him any good, rode off as soon as his motor started.

Hardy was too late to see him go, and it hurt him that the farewell had been so abrupt.

In December Lawrence sailed for India, and he was stationed for some time at Karachi. It was while he was at this station that he was asked whether he would translate Homer's *Odyssey* for publication in America. He felt it was too high an honour, and told the prospective publisher so, but in the end he was persuaded to undertake the task. He did not agree, however, without stating emphatically that his connexion with the translation must not be disclosed, as he 'never again wanted to be a victim of the press'.

At Karachi, and later at Miranshah on the north-west frontier of India, he spent every spare moment translating Homer into what he called 'straight English'.

He was gradually collecting enough money to pay for his motor-cycle, and to clear off the debt on his little cottage in Dorset, which he had bought to shelter him in his eventual retirement.

He was a little happier in the atmosphere of the border, for it was here that Alexander the Great had staggered the world centuries before with his swift military strategy.

But the authorities were not happy. Lawrence had not been able to keep his identity a secret, and, helped by wild stories and articles in various newspapers, both British and foreign, the rumour began to grow towards the end of 1928 that he was not

serving in the Royal Air Force in India as a simple soldier, but as one of Britain's secret-service agents!

Meanwhile, he had completed his book, in which he had written a very intimate account of the Arabian revolt. He did not spare his own feelings, and did not attempt to gloss over his own failings or those with whom he came into contact. Well-known artists helped to make the book one of the finest ever produced, but only 200 copies were printed, and practically all these were kept for private circulation at thirty guineas a copy. Twelve copies were printed in the United States for sale, and each of them was priced at \$20,000, or over £4,000.

The private issue was immediately followed by the printing of an abridged edition, called *The Revolt in the Desert*, and this obtained a great circulation. Five editions were rapidly printed and sold, and when the limit set by Lawrence was reached—he was anxious only to cover the amount of his debt on the original private book and this later one—the rest of the money which resulted from the sales of his books was invested to form a special fund to provide education for children of men in the Royal Air Force.

Reports began to appear that the Afghan Government were distinctly disturbed at the fact

that the 'mysterious Colonel Lawrence' was so near their border.

Why should so great an Englishman be serving as an ordinary soldier in the British Army? There was no need for it. Therefore he must be on the frontier for a secret reason, and if it was a secret reason it must be against their interests.

The British Minister at Kabul began to be so worried by the persistent questions that he sent a protest to England, asking for the reports to be denied or for Lawrence (or 'Shaw' as he was known in the Air Force) to be removed from service on the frontier.

The story of Lawrence's supposed secret-service activities cropped up in various parts of the world, and in the end instructions were issued for his return to England. Once more the press had turned Lawrence's ordinarily happy life into a misery, and he had occasion to complain with increased bitterness of the 'sensation-hunting papers'.

Lawrence left India in January 1929, and a month later he was in England. Unfortunately the authorities were too careful in their anxiety to prevent any further fuss being made about him.

When his boat arrived at Plymouth an Admiralty launch went out to meet it in the ordinary course of its duties, and—more for convenience than any-

thing else—‘Aircraftsman Shaw’ was sent ashore in the launch. The papers got hold of this and magnified it into another mystery. Questions in the House of Commons followed.

Was Shaw known to be Colonel Lawrence when he enlisted?

Was he always engaged on ordinary duties?

Did he have any leave when serving in India?

Another member of Parliament wanted to know what complaints the Afghan Government had made.

Was Colonel Lawrence mixed up in any way with the abdication of King Amanullah?

In view of the mysterious way in which he had been landed, was it true that Colonel Lawrence was still in India, and that some one else had been brought home?

These were questions asked in the British House of Commons, so natural was it to attribute mystery to every move Lawrence made.

On his return to England, Lawrence was stationed at Plymouth, but he was a public character. Press men were careful to pick up any odd little stories, true or otherwise, with which his name was connected.

For the remainder of the year he was well occupied with details in connexion with Schneider Cup races. There were rumours in May that he was

always sneaking out of camp every night to dash on his motor-cycle to his cottage in Dorset, and they hinted at more mystery. Actually he had not been out of camp at all.

Lawrence had no peace. His wish to keep secret his translation of the *Odyssey* was shattered, and in his disgust he nearly gave up the work. At odd times the papers would start up another 'scare', and he had had so much trouble with the reports that he wrote to a friend: 'England is an annoying little gossip-shop!'

In the Near East and the Far East, however, there was no belief whatever that 'Aircraftsman Shaw' was Colonel Lawrence, and that he was actually in England.

China was certain Lawrence was in Hong Kong on some 'secret investigations', and even a definite statement that he was in England, that he was 'Shaw', and that he was in Mount Batten was accepted as 'a very clever invention to cover up the activities of the British Secret Service'.

Lawrence's work in the R.A.F. depot delayed his progress with the translation of the *Odyssey* until the latter part of 1930, when he was able to get ahead owing to operations being held up by bad weather.

The China rumour got into the papers again, this time connecting him with the negotiations for treaty agreements between China and England.

According to the newspapers, he was in three places at once!

The actual fact was he had not been out of England since February 1929, and some of the more reliable newspapers emphasized this fact.

The Far East would have it he was in China, and then Russia claimed that Lawrence was in Turkestan causing trouble between the republic there and the main Soviet Government; and if the Soviet did not establish a garrison in the region, Lawrence would have the natives revolting throughout Turkestan. The Soviet Government wanted to know what the British Government were going to do about it.

The report of the Russians was the more sensational because they had already been informed from Holland that Lawrence had been killed earlier in the year in an aeroplane disaster.

There were the usual denials, and the incident faded into the background until November 1930.

The Russian Government started a trial for treason against a number of officials, and the evidence given by the prisoners revived the old doubts as to whether Lawrence was actually serving in the Air Force in 1927.

In the statements made by the prisoners, and in reply to cross-examination, they swore on oath that secret meetings had been held in London in

1927 and 1928, in which Colonel Lawrence was the chief mover. The idea was to prepare a revolution against the Soviet Government in Russia, and Lawrence was to engineer the revolt with the help of French and British troops and the states bordering on Russia.

The men giving the evidence were on trial for their lives, and all the questions asked during the hearing, which lasted twelve days, merely emphasized the statements, made on oath, that it had been Colonel Lawrence they had seen in London in 1927 and 1928, and that France knew also that he was a party to the plot.

Once again Parliament was faced with a series of questions, and in order to give a complete denial to this very serious allegation of British interference with the Soviet Government, the Secretary of State for Air gave in the House of Commons detailed information to the effect that 'Aircraftsman Shaw sailed for India on the 7th December, 1926, arrived on 7th January, 1927, and served in that country till 12th January, 1929, when he embarked for home, arriving on the 2nd February, 1929. He was not granted any leave while serving in India.'

The reply was given on January 10, 1931, and the British public, puzzled as ever, began to realize that whatever was said in England about this

mysterious man, no one abroad, particularly the countries of the Near East and the Far East, would ever be convinced that Lawrence was not mixed up in every intrigue and plot that had disturbed the peace of the world since the Great War. Even Germany joined in the chorus.

While the questions were being asked in the House, Lawrence had been transferred to the motor-boat section of the Royal Air Force for special duty connected with the new speed-boats that were being built near Southampton.

For some months he had been planning a new style of speed-boat. A theory, vaguely formed when watching other boats, had been put to the test. Boats at that time were provided with tremendous engine power, yet they did not seem capable of putting up the speeds which the engine power warranted.

Lawrence, in one tremendous change, entirely revolutionized speed-boat construction. He planned and supervised the building of a boat whose stern, instead of running to the usual keel, ended in a small flat base. Thus, with the boat running at speed and three-quarters of its bulk out of the water, it *skimmed* along the surface, instead of cutting through it.

So impressed were the naval engineers with this change that the news of the design attracted the

attention of foreign governments, and at the present time the new style speed-boat is being included in most modern navies, and is also being favoured by the sporting experts.

Lawrence was continually engaged in testing the engines, and then in taking the boats out for their trials along the coast. The expert often marvelled at the speed with which he sent the craft hurtling along the surface of the water, and the skill he displayed in his handling of the boats in all sorts of water, smooth and rough.

At last the trials eased up, and the *Odyssey* was finished.

But the East was not finished with him. Some one in Asia Minor, searching for a cause for the bitter religious riots which had broken out in Mene-men in February 1931, put Colonel Lawrence at the bottom of the trouble, and promptly told the world about it. For a few months the papers found him appearing in odd corners, always where there was trouble, and in July 1932 a German wireless station startled everybody by accusing Britain of attempting to bring about a secret agreement with Tibet, 'with the help of Colonel Lawrence'.

Meanwhile, the Air Force kept 'Shaw' employed; and he carried on, caring little what character the world had given him.

Then, for a little while, the papers gave him

a rest. Actually they had spread so many false stories about this mysterious Englishman that the man in the street began to wonder if, after all, he was so great a character as people believed him to be. When once that doubt arose, it spread, and Lawrence was thankful that even this fall from heroic heights into being a mere 'adventurer' gave him relief from the annoying persecution and publicity of the past few years.

In March 1933 he applied for his discharge from the Royal Air Force, but the authorities took their time over this application. He was not yet out of his period of service, and the fact that a man had private reasons for wanting to leave the Army mattered little. Sentiment has no place in army regulations.

He continued with his hobby of motor-cycling. He bought only one kind of machine, a Brough, and he named each one as he bought it 'Boanerges'. They were already noted for speed when they came from the makers, but he would make various adjustments, and add this and that gadget, until the machine itself could stand the pace no longer. Then he put it on one side and sent for another, asking for more speed with each new machine.

The memory of his exploits in Arabia was fading. Occasionally a story would revive interest, but not for long. For a time there had been attempts to

form a company to produce a film on his Arabian revolt, but Lawrence would have nothing to do with it.

For a year and more he enjoyed what was probably to him the most peaceful life possible since 1918. He had his motor-cycles, his cottage in Dorset saw him during practically all spare hours, and he kept in touch with his small but extremely select circle of friends. He was engaged in writing another book, a yet more intimate study of life in general and army life in particular.

The public were forgetting him. He lived his life without interference, and began to plan for that complete independence of existence that would be his when he got his discharge from army service and retired to the cottage in Dorset.

Clouds Hill, Moreton—that was his haven of refuge, and in March 1935 he finally left the Royal Air Force and retired to his peaceful seclusion.



## CHAPTER XVIII

*So bury me by some sweet Garden-side.*

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

ON Monday, May 13, just before noon, Lawrence had been on his motor-cycle to Bovington Camp, Dorset, the scene of his service in the Tank Corps in 1923.

He was returning along the road from the camp at about fifty to sixty miles an hour when he must have been suddenly confronted with two boys, who were riding bicycles in the direction in which he was going. The boys themselves stated that they were riding abreast, and for some reason—it is not clear why—they went into single file.

Whether Lawrence was unsighted, or whether the boys moved too late will never be known. There is the mute evidence of the skid-marks on the road, which show that Lawrence must have put his brakes on violently in order to avoid a collision. He was too late, and he was thrown over the handle-bars of his machine, on to his head.

He was rushed to Wool Military Hospital, and despite every attempt at secrecy, the news of the accident leaked out, and in a few hours all the world knew that one of its most romantic figures

had met with a very serious accident, and was lying in hospital in a dangerous condition.

As the hours passed, every one forgot his doubts and his scoffing. Now that Lawrence was in danger his greatness became emphasized. Important physicians and surgeons were called into consultation, and other experts were hurried down to the hospital in an attempt to seize the smallest possible chance of saving his life.

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday—each day passed without a sign from the unconscious man. The doctors agreed that any ordinary person would have died almost immediately from the terrible injuries he had sustained, but Lawrence's constitution was such that despite his unconscious state the body was putting up a magnificent fight for life.

Every aid that modern science could offer was brought to the little bedside at Wool, but at last the anxious watchers began to shake their heads.

Secretly, knowing that the injuries would permanently affect Lawrence's brain and speech even if he did recover, and knowing how much he loved swift life, they hoped for a merciful release.

Through the long hours of Saturday, day and night, the struggle went on, but at midnight it was known that it was just a matter of time before the heroic life was done.

The silence and the mystery which had so long shrouded all his activities had now become a heavier cloak, fast enfolding him in an inscrutability beyond penetration. All the press waited, knowing that death was coming, but anxious to be the first to tell the world of the passing of one of its heroes.

Just after eight o'clock on Sunday morning, May 19, the feeble beat of Lawrence's brave heart ceased.

No tale can alter death, but it is not remarkable that even Lawrence's passing had its mystery. At the inquiry which followed, the corporal who saw Lawrence come up the road from the camp also stated quite emphatically that just before Lawrence collided with the two boys a black car passed him, going in the opposite direction.

The boys did not see it, neither did any one else, but the corporal was in no doubt about it.

Lawrence and his mysteries lie buried in a simple grave by the side of the river Frome.

He himself made no mystery of his life. He fought a good fight, and—like most Englishmen—when it was finished he wanted to forget all about it.

King George, unable to press honours upon him when he was alive, paid a great tribute to him in a message he sent to his brother.

'Your brother's name', the message said, 'will

live in history. The King gratefully recognizes his distinguished services to his country, and feels that it is tragic that the end should have come in this manner to a life so full of promise.'

In that tribute from the world's greatest King there is a regret which is echoed in all hearts, a lingering sorrow that the little Englishman with the great heart should, in such tragic fashion, have missed the earthly peace which he sought so eagerly. He fought hard and bitterly for freedom, and his appearance in our humdrum, mechanized world was so swift that he flashed in and out of sight before we could realize what we were losing... *'a life so full of promise'*.









